



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # RI-5033

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
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Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:23 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, 18. Includes detailed text description of the core area requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Financial investment since 2007 has maintained at 2007 levels or has decreased in comparison to 2007. The total state contributions decreased from 70.6 million in 2007 to 42.1 million in 2011. However, the 2011 figures generally are higher than the 2010 figures. The state has invested in state-funded preschool in 2010 (pilot programs) and has enacted legislation to expand and continue to fund this program during the next ten years. The state is currently providing services to approximately half of children living in poverty. Rhode Island does not currently have Early Learning and Development Standards for infants and toddlers. It does have standards for preschoolers. The state mandates universal newborn screening and provides developmental screening for preschoolers through local school districts. Formative assessment is conducted in pre-k programs, programs funded by Part B of IDEA, and most Head Start programs using the Teaching Strategies GOLD. This has been aligned to the early learning standards. The CLASS also is used to measure adult-child interaction and they employ a math/science assessment as well as an assessment of supports for emergent bilingual acquisition. All but 1% of child care subsidies were for care in licensed child care centers, family child-care homes, and group family child-care homes. Research examining the quality of child care centers found that 80% of center-based programs for infants and toddlers and 96% of center-based preschools provided medium-high quality experiences. Family child care homes had much lower scores. 64% of family child care homes provided low-quality experiences. The state mandates kindergarten entry assessment but does not require specific instruments and does not include data in the longitudinal data system. The technical adequacy of the assessments is not known and the assessments are not currently aligned to early learning standards. All programs have health and safety requirements, and all programs except those that receive CCDF funds and that are licensed by the state, also include developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening and follow-up and health promotion activities. Health literacy is not addressed in any of the programs serving young children. The state has family engagement strategies for each type of program. Strategies vary across programs and are tied to the TQRIS. The workforce credentials framework is at the beginning stages. Some of the credentials are aligned to the workforce knowledge and competency framework, others are not (e.g., administrator and Early Childhood Specialist credentials, and credentials offered by community college and university preservice programs). Several

data systems currently house data on children, families, educators and programs; however, they are not linked and each has their own child and educator identifier. There are plans to consolidate the data systems. The state has documented strong interagency collaboration and collaboration with community partners. It has initiated several high quality programs and initiatives such as TEACH, Nurse Family Partnership, Starting Right (comprehensive systems plan), Pre-K pilot programs and funding support built into current legislation, child and health care.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Rhode Island has set very ambitious goals that are achievable because they build on the systems that are already in place such as a TQRIS, universal Screening, Formative Assessment using the Teaching Strategies GOLD, and the T.E.A.C.H program. The proposed goals fill needs within the state that currently are not met such as a set of Early Learning Standards for infants and toddlers and a complete Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. For example, the application proposes to increase the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs from the current 10% to 100% by 12/2013 and by 2015, the state intends to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators who are credentialed to 2500. The goals address improving program quality and improving outcomes for children by increasing the number of programs participating in the TQRIS and increasing movement across the levels of program quality within the TQRIS, providing incentives and supports for movement to higher quality levels, creating a statewide career lattice for Early Childhood Educators, and developing and phasing in a statewide comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The state also proposes to develop a cross-departmental Early Learning Data System that will link data from multiple state agencies and that will be integrated with the State Longitudinal Data System in order to track the status of Children with High Needs (E-2). In addition, the state will require all licensed and publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs to participate in the TQRIS, Bright Stars. The summary of the state plan is clear and provides a clear rationale for addressing the selected criteria in each Focused Area Investment. The state will develop statewide high quality Early Learning and Development Standards by developing a set of infant and toddler standards that will be aligned with the existing Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool-aged children (C-1). These will be available in both Spanish and English and professional development provided to help Early Childhood Educators use the standards in program development. Rhode Island will address the Comprehensive Assessment System by building on current practices in universal screening for children, formative assessment that is implemented in self-contained classrooms and state-funded pre-k programs, and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interaction, and Measure of Environmental Quality. The State Plan will expand all these components to each age group, resulting in a Comprehensive Assessment System (C-2). The state proposes to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that is aligned with levels of the TQRIS and describes plans to support Early Childhood Educators (D-1, D-2). Currently the state does not have a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. In E-1 it outlines plans to develop and evaluate a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment and to assure that it is appropriate for Children with High Needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The state has provided an effective description of the current and future plans for alignment and coordination of early learning and development across the state. This will support the state in meeting the goals outlined in the application. The Lead Agency for the project will be the Department of Education with leadership and oversight provided by the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. The state has a long history of collaboration among state agencies that will participate in the RTT-ELC including the Department of Human Services; Department of Health; Department for Children, Youth, and Families; and the Early Learning Council. There is strong evidence of support for the project from state agencies such as these and the MOUs are included in the application. The Early Learning Council includes 24 members representing early childhood organizations, the private sector, pediatricians, higher education faculty, and early intervention programs. There also is support from state organizations, programs, the private sector, and legislators as evidenced by letters of support. The strong support from key stakeholders positions the state well to successfully implement the proposed State Plan. The State Plan was developed with input from focus groups as well as comments provided by state partners, community agencies, and organizations. The application has the full support of key early learning intermediary organization and representatives from public schools, advocacy organizations, and parent information centers. The application provides an organizational chart and describes a process for consensus decision making that includes monthly cross-departmental meetings. The MOUs provide detailed scope of work and roles and responsibilities among all partners.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The state has provided an effective budget plan that will support implementation of the proposed projects and activities and that will result in sustainability of an effective and coordinated TQRIS system across the state. The state will leverage resources from existing programs and agencies including the TQRIS, KIDSNET, CCDF Quality Set Aside resources, IDEA Parts C and B, Head Start, Child Care Assistance Program, TANF, Child Welfare, United Way, and Rhode Island Foundation, and Department of Education. The state is committed to contributing a considerable amount of dollars to the total budget. The state's contribution exceeds the total funding from the RTT-ELC grant. The application addresses sustainability of the project after the RTT-ELC grant has ended. For example, much of the requested funding will be used to enhance existing initiatives such as the state data system. The state already supports this system through cross-department Early Learning Data System and is committed to continue to support the enhancements that are outlined in the application. United Way and the Rhode Island Foundation also support many initiatives such as the TQRIS and are committed to continue providing this support after the grant has ended. The projects for which funding is requested build on ongoing initiatives and programs. For example, the state is in the process of aligning professional development resources across sectors including child care, pre-k, early intervention, and early childhood special education.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <p>(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Early Learning and Development Standards; (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System; (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications; (4) Family engagement strategies; (5) Health promotion practices; and (6) Effective data practices; <p>(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and</p> <p>(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (B)(1)		

The state currently has a partially implemented TQRIS and it proposes a High Quality Plan to expand and revise a TQRIS. The state currently has a five star or level TQRIS and this has been in place since 2008. The quality levels are aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards for 3-5 year olds but there are no early learning standards for infants and toddlers with which to align. These standards will be developed and aligned as part of the RTT-ELC grant process. The current standards were evaluated by NAEYC, the Office of Head Start, National Child Care Information Center, National Institute for Early Education Research, and several staff from a number of different states. The TQRIS Standards were field tested by an outside evaluator; field test results indicated that the levels within the TQRIS represented differentiated quality of programs. The different levels of the current TQRIS address assessment, educator qualification, family engagement strategies, health promotion practices, and cultural and linguistic competency, an area that reflects the needs of the early childhood population and their families in Rhode Island. The TQRIS addresses all areas outlined in the application guidelines with the exception of effective data practices. This currently limits the state's ability to link data on child outcomes to program improvement and to track children's progress over time. However, the application discusses plans for gathering data, entering data in the longitudinal data system, and using data to guide instruction and program improvement in E1 and 2 and Priority 2. In addition to the standards within the TQRIS, the state has four additional sets of standards that are associated with Head Start programs, Child Care Licensing, Department of Education PK – 12 programs, and comprehensive ECE program standards. This can result in different (additional) expectations across programs participating in the TQRIS. The application proposes to combine the existing, disparate standards into a comprehensive set of standards that apply to all programs participating in the TQRIS. These standards, including the newly developed infant and toddler standards, will be aligned with basic licensing standards. This will allow all licensed programs in the state to be part of the TQRIS, with basic licensing standards matching level 1 of the TQRIS. The state will conduct evaluation of the revised standards' ability to discriminate between levels of quality and will provide training and support to programs to promote participation in the revised 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)

Rhode Island already has many incentives to participate in the TQRIS in place including differential reimbursement rates, quality improvement grants, and program recognition. It also requires some programs to participate in the TQRIS such as programs providing Pre-K services. It does not require licensed and unlicensed programs to participate in the TQRIS. Only 10% of programs licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) participate. This represents an increase from 20 programs to 100 programs in 2011 but there clearly is a need to increase the number of programs that participate in TQRIS in order to increase the number of children participating in high quality programs. The state plans to require all licensed programs to participate in TQRIS by 2013 and for all other programs that receive federal or state funding (e.g., IDEA, Part B 619) to participate by 2014. Current incentives and supports will be maintained. The state provided baseline data and ambitious yet achievable targets resulting in 100% of programs participation in TQRIS by 2015. This represents a strength of the plan. Incentives to facilitate meeting these goals include tying funding to participation in the TQRIS, quality improvement grants, and statewide recognition of program's levels of quality achievement within the TQRIS. The application failed to discuss specific policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care.

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

15

12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state uses measures of environmental quality that have technical adequacy and that are considered high quality assessment. These include the ECERS, FFCCERS-R, and ITERS. The monitoring tools, Program Standards, and application materials are available in Spanish as well as English; and program evaluators who are bilingual conduct evaluations with family child-care providers who speak Spanish. This addresses one of the categories of Children with High Needs given that approximately 70% of licensed family child care providers speak Spanish as their native language, which is a strength of this application. The state uses a train the trainers model to train individuals to administer the ERS evaluations. A criteria of 85% reliability on scoring the ERS assessments is used and reliability is conducted every 20 assessments following initial training and reliability verification. The ERS are valid and reliable tools for monitoring program quality. The state currently does not evaluate licensed family child care homes with sufficient frequency (once every two years). This is problematic given that 64% of the family child care homes are scored at low quality levels. They intend to increase the frequency of evaluation to once per year. Information to parents about the TQRIS and ratings is available on a variety of websites, displayed within programs, and families are told about the TQRIS when they contact the state referral line. Materials are available in Spanish and English, again addressing one of the children and families included in High Needs Children with High Needs. However, additional strategies for informing families who may not have access to web-based resources were not included.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Participation in the Bright Stars TQRIS system is not required for all programs in the state. The state does not currently provide tiered reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families participating in DHS Child Care Assistance Programs and many programs have indicated that they do not have sufficient resources to meet the quality levels required participate in the TQRIS at the basic level. To address this partial participation issue, participation in the TQRIS will be required for all licensed programs and differential reimbursement rates will be available within the TQRIS. This will increase the number of programs that achieve minimal quality standards for serving High Needs Children. The standards for basic licensure will be level one in the TQRIS. The application outlines several resources for programs to improve quality (e.g., Early Learning Standards Project, Child Care Support Network, Child Care Facilities fund). The state currently has only one Bright Stars Quality Improvement

Specialist to support all programs within the TQRIS system. This could lead to infrequent support provided across programs. A strength however, is that the application proposes to hire additional Bright Stars Quality Improvement Specialists who will provide technical assistance to programs as they seek to increase program quality. Rhode Island offers TEACH scholarships and community college training to improve the quality of the workforce. It offers incentives for increasing quality but proposes to provide program improvement grants which have been successful at increasing movement between quality levels. The state has established ambitious yet achievable goals to increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS and moving to higher levels of quality over time. By 2013 all licensed programs and public school preschool programs will be required by law to participate in the TQRIS. While increasing the number of programs participating in the TQRIS, the application also targets ambitious yet achievable goals to increase the percent of programs achieving higher levels of quality. By the end of the project, the percent of programs at levels 3, 4, and 5 will increase from the current 15, 17, and 6% respectively to 20, 15, and 15% respectively. The state plans to offer tiered reimbursement rates for child care providers as a means of promoting movement to higher quality levels. Higher rates will be tied to higher levels of reimbursement within the TQRIS and programs may apply for Quality Improvement Grants to make changes needed to move to a higher quality level. They also stress that programs that serve children with the highest needs will be eligible to receive one-two year program improvement contracts based on the number of children served. The TEACH scholarships will be expanded and technical assistance will be coordinated by program quality specialists at all levels and types of programs. The application stated that pre-K and Head Start programs offer full day care but it did not discuss other incentives designed to specifically support families in accessing high quality programs and does not discuss incentives for families with infants and toddlers who have high needs.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	7

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)(b)

Rhode Island has completed a study that indicated the TQRIS was able to differentiate quality across the five levels. The study was conducted by an outside evaluator with a history of conducting high quality research and evaluation studies. The evaluator provided a number of recommendations for improving the TQRIS and these were incorporated into a revised TQRIS framework in 2009. The state intends to work with an outside evaluator to validate the effectiveness of the updated Bright Stars TQRIS and to compare child outcomes to different levels of program quality. The application states that measures of child learning and development will be tracked in the areas of social skills and language and literacy. It does not identify how these measures will be selected and does not discuss the use of other areas of learning and development. The application does not discuss research designs, how they will select and how the state will use measures of progress to examine the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in child learning, development, and school readiness. The proposed plan leads to an inadequate examination of child outcomes related to quality levels in the TQRIS, especially given that the state has selected the GOLD assessment which covers all areas of learning and development. The plan does not discuss research designs. In addition, the plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the TQRIS will only focus on preschool-aged children. It does not include infants and toddlers and programs that are not center-based, although the application states that they will seek private funding to conduct evaluations with these children and child care provider settings. As a result, the validation of the effectiveness of the TQRIS will be limited.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	22

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 state has a set of early learning and development standards for preschool but does not have standards for infants and toddlers. These will be developed during the first year of the grant. The state already has a history of evaluating and revising the preschool standards, aligning the standards with K – 3 standards, preschool curricula and providing professional development on the standards. Each of these experiences should be helpful in meeting their goals to revise and update the preschool standards and develop infant and toddler standards. The preschool early learning standards are aligned with the K-3 standards, reflected in the TQRIS standards, and integrated into the workforce knowledge and competency framework. The state is well positioned to complete the goals of strengthening the existing early learning standards for preschoolers, developing a set for infants and toddlers, and infusing those standards across the various state systems, programs, and standards. The preschool standards will be updated following review by a national expert who will create a crosswalk between the current standards and other valid sets of standards such as the Common Core Standards, Teaching Strategies GOLD standards, recommendations for using standards with English Learners and for child children with disabilities, and Head Start standards. The plan incorporates verification of the developmental, linguistic, and appropriate school readiness content across the two sets of standards, expansion of professional development training including train the trainer models and on-line training, and expansion of family engagement resources. The kindergarten readiness assessment will be developed after the standards are completed to assure alignment between the standards and assessment. The new Early Learning and Development Standards will be integrated within the TQRIS and the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Framework and aligned with approved curricula and assessments. The state will recruit professionals to serve on an Early Learning Standards Advisory Team and the Standards Advisory Team to assure that the final set of standards support the learning of Children with High Needs. The application does not provide information about the process for doing this such as how frequently the teams will meet and how the work of the two teams will be integrated. Furthermore, it does not specify the areas that will be evaluated by the teams such as alignment with K - 3 standards; incorporation of the Early Learning Standards into Program Standards; the developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness of the standards; how the standards are incorporated into curricula and activities; and professional development activities.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The state has each component of a high quality Comprehensive Assessment System in place; however, they are not universally employed with infant and toddlers. For example, Formative Assessment and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interaction are only used with preschool-aged children. Thus, the state has a partially implemented Comprehensive Assessment System in place and proposes a High Quality Plan for expanding and revising the current Comprehensive Assessment System. The state provides developmental screening for 0-3 and 3-5 years old children and intends to add Ages and Stages Social Emotional to the screening assessment. It uses the GOLD as the formative assessment for preschool aged children but does not currently employ a formative assessment for infants and toddlers. A strength of the plan is that the GOLD will be adopted state-wide from 0-5 years of age in licensed programs; however, it will not be required for programs that do not participate in the TQRIS limiting the state's knowledge of learning and development for those children. In addition, the application did not describe how the GOLD would be used in the evaluation of the TQRIS on child outcomes. The state also employs an assessment of math and science skills, an assessment of classroom supports for emergent bilingual acquisition (addressing the potential needs of English Learners, one category within the definition of High Needs Children), and an assessment of adult-child interaction (CLASS) for children in state and federally funded preschool programs. The application does not propose an assessment to be used to measure the quality of adult-child interactions with infants and toddlers in center-based programs. Measures of program quality are part of the TQRIS which will be required of all licensed programs. The state will provide free professional development to assure that early childhood educators and infant and toddlers specialists have access to training in comprehensive assessment. This should increase the number of providers who participate in professional development training. The state also will provide training on the specific assessment tools that are adopted as well as training on using data on child outcomes to make decisions about instruction. It also will provide state systems for aligning and integrating assessment and sharing assessment results. Rhode Island does not have the capacity to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate child outreach screening for young English learners throughout the state. The adoption of common assessment tools that are available in Spanish and English and on-line and other professional development training provided in Spanish and English should help address this issue.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The state does not currently have a workforce knowledge and competency framework in place but proposes a High Quality Plan to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. There are core competencies for early childhood teachers and draft competencies for early childhood teacher assistants that are aligned with the early learning standards (currently only available for preschool) and the two sets of competencies are aligned with each other across domains. Competencies for other positions are not developed (see comment below for the number of competencies yet to be developed). The State Plan includes the key features of a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework as defined in the RTT-ELC application. The state has outlined the process and framework for developing and aligning core competencies across positions that includes a teacher career lattice at levels I, II, III, and IV, Bloom's taxonomy, and six domains of competence. These will be used to develop additional competencies for family child care providers, administrators and education coordinators, professional development providers and higher education faculty, and early intervention and early childhood

special education staff. The application documents agency collaboration and the use of multiple resources that will be used in developing and validating new standards. This will increase buy-in of the standards as well as a broad perspective that includes the different types of providers and programs in the state. One particular strength is the development of standards for professional development providers and higher education faculty, a focus on in-depth options for training, and the plan to align curricula in higher education programs with the various core competencies. This will provide the evidence-based training that is recommended to increase the effectiveness of professional development training. The state will require all professional development supported by state agencies to be aligned with the workforce knowledge and competency framework. However, a system for obtaining the agreement of higher education institutions and program faculty including a timeline and support for engaging faculty in the intensive work needed in aligning curricula and competencies is not provided.

	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 professional development system currently is not well organized because the state does not have a Workforce Knowledge and Development Framework in place. The state does not currently have a work force registry or and it is in the process of developing a career pathways framework. As a result, the state does not currently have baseline measures regarding the early learning workforce to include in Tables (D)(2)(d)(1) and (2). For this reason, it is difficult to judge if the targets are ambitious and achievable. The first year of the grant will be used to complete a workforce study in order to determine baseline data and to add that data to the newly created Early Learning Data System. The state has identified the essential elements of a high quality professional development system that will be re-designed to support the early childhood workforce. These elements include professional standards, career pathways, articulation, an advisory structure, financing to promote access to professional development, and data systems to track quality and long terms impact of professional development. Some of these elements are in development and others will be developed during the course of the grant. High quality aspects of the plan to increase the availability and accessibility of professional development opportunities include the design of a professional development approval process that includes both training content and follow-up support and approval of professional development providers. The state also will use a train the trainer model to increase local capacity to provide training, especially for linguistically diverse providers. Also, career advisers will be employed and will be able to serve monolingual and bilingual providers. Additional strengths of the proposed program include peer networks, options for on-line training and alternative pathways to improve qualification, and tax credit, loan forgiveness, and TEACH scholarship incentives.

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

20

16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state does not have a common statewide Kindergarten Readiness Entry Assessment, however, it does have initiatives in place to build on as they develop the Rhode Island Kindergarten Readiness Entry Assessment. For example, school districts currently are required to screen children prior to school entry (although there is no consistency among kindergarten programs in the assessments they employ and what they do with assessment outcomes). The state currently has a data system to track children's health status. The state is developing a K-12 longitudinal data system to which they will add data for young Children with High Needs, and the state received a Ready Schools grant to identify skills for kindergarten entry. The application describes the plan to develop, evaluate, and phase in a common Kindergarten Readiness Entry Assessment. The plan assures that the needs of English Language Learners and children with disabilities are addressed as is technical adequacy (i.e., validity and reliability), alignment with standards, and assessment of all domains of kindergarten readiness. The high quality plan also includes plans to develop and offer training for teachers and administrators that focuses on the link between assessment and instruction, how to develop accommodations for diverse learners, the importance of assessment reliability and fidelity of assessment practices, and confidentiality of assessment outcomes. As outlined in E2, the plan will be housed in an early learning data system which will facilitate the exchange of data among programs and generate information that is timely, accessible, and easy to use for continuous improvement. The state describes an achievable phased implementation plan to begin in year one, with pilot implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment conducted in 2014-2015 school year. The assessment will be employed statewide by 2016-1017.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16

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)

Rhode Island currently collects and maintains data about children and families, programs, and the early childhood workforce. However the data are housed across multiple databases and some types of data are not available or are very limited such as baseline data regarding the early learning workforce [Tables (D)(2)(d)(1) and (2)] and the number of children serving as peer models in blended or inclusive preschool programs. The state has developed a plan to develop a comprehensive data system that links existing systems and that builds on the currently developed RIDE Data Warehouse system used for children in the public schools. The plan for the early learning data system identifies all of the Essential Data Elements such as unique statewide child, program, and Early Childhood Educator identifiers, child and family demographic information, child level program participation, and data on program-level quality and structure. These Essential Data Elements will enable uniform data collection and easy data entry, facilitate the exchange of data among agencies, and will yield timely and easily accessible data that can be used at local and state levels. The state will assure participation in the data system through licensing and TQRIS requirements. The application describes professional development training and technical assistance to support family child care providers as they to begin to enter data into the system. The plan meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with federal, state, and local privacy laws.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	226

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Rhode Island currently licenses only programs that care for four or more unrelated children in a provider setting. As stated in the grant application, children who are cared for in unregulated child care often receive low quality care. Although the state has established a long term goal to license programs caring for fewer than four children, that goal will not be realized within the time frame of this grant. The focus on only programs that care for four or more unrelated children in a provider setting will result in a portion of the Children with High Needs in Rhode Island not being served in Early Learning and Development Programs that are included in the TQRIS. Current licensure regulations addresses health and safety, appropriate environmental quality, and minimal qualification for providers. The state has identified several goals to improve the licensing requirements and procedures as well as the frequency of inspection for family child-care homes which will be implemented with current programs and later applied to smaller programs. Examples of these include expanding professional development training and technical assistance to programs, program improvement grants to assist programs in moving to higher quality levels, and increasing the frequency of inspection for family child-care homes from every two years to every year. The state has a TQRIS system in place and intends to revise and expand the system to include all state-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs. All programs will be required to participate in the TQRIS and will have access to technical assistance, quality improvement grants, and differential reimbursement rates as incentives and supports to increase to higher levels of quality.

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 provided a plan to address selection criteria E-1 and obtained a score of 16 points which exceeds the 70% of the maximum points criteria.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>Rhode Island has demonstrated cross agency and organization collaboration and the collaboration of public and private partners. It has developed an effective model for developing committees that include wide representation across agencies and stakeholders that are charged with evaluating current systems, reviewing current resources and evidence-based practices, and developing, revising, or expanding on current work and programs. This model will assure continued high quality in meeting the goals articulated in the RTT-ELC application. Rhode Island has developed an ambitious yet achievable reform agenda that builds on programs to date. The State Plan is likely to increase the quality of programs through the TQRIS and to expand the number of programs serving Children with High Needs resulting in improved school readiness. The application articulates plans to develop and phase in a comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Assessment, strengthen existing Early Learning and Development Standards for preschoolers and develop an aligned set of standards for infants and toddlers, and to develop a Comprehensive Knowledge and Competency Framework, and Statewide Longitudinal Data System.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # RI-5033

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 5:34 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, 18. Includes detailed description and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
The applicant has written an exceptional proposal that provides a rich description and compelling evidence for the State's past and continued commitment and investment to high quality Early Learning and Development programs and services for children with high needs. During the economic crisis the State has continued to provide high quality childhood education to children with high needs. For example it has invested a large portion of its TANF funds into the Child Care subsidy system, as well as investing state funds to supplement the federal investment in Head Start, enabling more children with high needs to have access to the program. In addition, the State has included funding for the State Pre-K program as a core part of its new education funding formula. In 2010-2011 the State Pre-K programs used a mixed delivery system that included public schools, child care centers and Head Start programs which delivered high quality programs to four year old children, with the end goal being to target communities with high needs first thereby providing resources to ensure greater access in these communities, thus serving children with high needs who need access to quality the most. Based on the data presented in the tables the state has shown a decrease in children with high needs from 2007-2011, although the numbers increased for Head Start and programs funded by IDEA Part C and B during 2010. The State provides childcare subsidies to working families who meet the income threshold for eligibility. That said due to the high rates of unemployment across the state over the last few years many families were no longer eligible for the subsidy. In 2007 the eligibility requirement was changed from 225% to 180% of the federal poverty guidelines. The goal was to help low-wage earners to continue to have access to high quality programs. The Early Learning Council recognizes the need to restore the program back to 225% so as to serve more children with high needs and has provided a strong recommendation to have an interim strategy of implementing differential entrance and exit eligibility standards so as to serve more children with high needs. In addition to serving more children with high needs, the State has also placed increasing emphasis on providing quality care across programs. In order to do this in a systematic and thoughtful way the State partnered with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill to conduct baseline studies to examine the quality of community-based early learning programs through the state. The findings from that work have been used as the basis for providing a plan to raise the quality of programs across the state. In addition to the above practices, the

state has also had a consistent level of legislative support and involvement. For example, the Rhode Island Literacy and Drop Out Prevention Act was passed in 1987 which required all school districts that provided elementary education to screen all children in order to determine school readiness. These screenings and assessments are currently being done at the LEA level to inform kindergarten instruction using a variety of measures. The task is not uniform and therefore may be somewhat inconsistent. To address this gap the state is working toward developing a statewide comprehensive assessment method. Furthermore, in 2007 the Rhode Island General Assembly established a voluntary quality rating system which was to assess quality in early care and education programs and school-aged child care, provide data about program quality, and assist parents in accessing quality childcare. The law led to the establishment of BrightStars which is Rhode Island's research-based TQRIS system and is a strength of their high quality plan. Moreover, the State passed the Pre-Kindergarten Education Act which was passed so that all children, but particularly those with high needs would receive a solid foundation in order to succeed later on in life. The law also directs state departments to work together with private partners to establish a comprehensive research based early childhood workforce scholarship program to increase the numbers of early childhood educators with associate or bachelor's degrees in early childhood. Finally the State enacted an education funding formula to make more money available to provide pre-K programs targeting highest need communities first. Taken together the aforementioned legislation provides strong evidence for the State's past, present and future commitment to providing, improving and sustaining quality early childhood education for children with high needs. These investments have led to the strong foundation upon which the current proposal has been built. The State has, and continues to have a system of collaborative governance, a focus of improving outcomes for children and families, a continued commitment to ensuring the quality of the workforce, has given attention to early learning and development standards, and has systematically developed and used data systems. To date, the state continues to raise the quality of its programs by ensuring that the foundations upon which it is based are continuously moving toward greater quality. That said, to continue progress on the Early Learning Standards efforts were made to align the standards with the Head Start Outcomes Framework and Grade Level Expectations for Kindergarten in 2003. This strategy is an excellent next step in ensuring consistent transition and quality. The State does not currently have standards for infants and toddlers a large section of the population. The next step on the part of state will be to expand the standards and accompanying supports to be used by programs serving infants and toddlers. In addition, the State's TQRIS requires Rhode Island Early Learning Standard training certificates as evidence of teacher and administrator qualifications. In addition, the Rhode Island Department of Education's preschool approval program standard requires that the curriculum, child assessment and family engagement be aligned with Rhode Island Early Learning Standards and also requires Standard training certificates as evidence of teacher and administrator qualifications. Both of these methods provide strong evidence for the State's commitment to high quality early childhood education. To date the State has demonstrated a strong commitment to a comprehensive assessment system as is evidenced by their promotion to regular developmental screenings through medical homes, their use of formative assessments such that they have aligned the assessments with learning objectives and goals to ensure that children enter kindergarten with a strong foundation, ready to succeed, their use of valid and reliable measures to assess environmental quality, and their use of valid and reliable measures to measure teacher quality. Taken together these methods provide a strong foundation for a comprehensive system to be used across all early child programs to ensure quality. The state also has as one of its policies to ensure access to high quality health care for children and families, and currently over 90% of Rhode Island's children have health care. The State is in process of completing the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies framework with a four-level Career Lattice for Early Childhood teachers and teacher assistants. Both approaches pave the way for the State to increase the number of qualified individuals in the workforce to serving children with high needs. The State does not currently have a kindergarten entry assessment but has identified it as a need to be addressed as it continues to develop and expand its comprehensive data system. Rhode Island currently houses two universal data warehouses, the State Longitudinal Data System managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education, and the KIDSNET, the newborn screening and public health data system managed by the Rhode Island Department of Health. Currently key data about children, early learning programs and the early childhood workforce are stored in separate databases managed by four separate State departments and one non-profit organization. The goal for the State is to build one integrated and coordinated Early Learning Data system building on the expertise and resources in both the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services under the leadership of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council which is made up of a private-public partnership. The State is well positioned to develop such a system based on the foundation it has worked hard to create and the collaborative efforts across agencies and private organizations.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant has clearly articulated a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable and builds on the State's solid foundation and progress to date on providing early childhood education for children with high needs. The State has a solid track record for establishing and maintaining public-private partnerships and working across State agencies to ensure high quality outcomes for children with high needs. The State has developed a reform plan that builds on its previous strengths and successes while taking the next step to pursue higher levels of quality within the early learning and development system that aligns work across the State agencies and while combining resources across public and private partners to achieve quality outcomes for children and families. The State has a commitment from the leadership of the State as is evidenced by the letters of support which will ensure that ambitious goals that they have set will be met. The State has a very high profile Early Learning Council made up of public and private partners that will ensure that the high quality plan put forth by the applicant will be developed and implemented successfully. The goals set forth by the State address program quality, improving child outcomes and closing the readiness gap. In order to raise program quality and build on its previous work the State proposes to increase the number of programs participating the BrightStars Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System from 93% to 100% by December 2013. The State will increase the number of programs with high quality, medium and basic quality benchmarks incrementally within the system across all early childhood and education programs. In addition, the State proposes to increasing the qualifications and effectiveness of Early Childhood educators so that the levels of credentials will be aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework in the State Career Lattice across all levels, i.e., Level 1 (12 college credits in Early Childhood Education), Level 2 (AA in Early Childhood Education) and Level 3(BA in Early Childhood Education). The State also proposes to increase the numbers of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from post-secondary institutions aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework as well as those receiving professional development aligned with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant has received several letters of support from Colleges and Universities supporting this goal. The State also proposes to improve child outcomes by using an integrated cross-department data system that will allow the State to track outcomes by population and program. In addition, it will have a statewide formative assessment system to track children's development and learning from birth to kindergarten. In order to close the school readiness gap that will leave children unprepared for grade school the State will again use the shared data system to asses and revise the Reform plan as needed to focus resources on closing the readiness gap. By December 2015 the goal of the state is to have begun the process of phasing in a statewide comprehensive kindergarten-entry data assessment to measure the status of children's knowledge and skills upon school entry. Finally, the last goal of the State is to use the Early Learning Data System and Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by December 2015 to ensure that specific populations of children with high needs such as English Language Learners, children involved in the welfare system, Latino children and children who have experienced homelessness are enrolled in high quality programs to prepare them to succeed in grade school. The State has provided a plan with a deliberate focus on selecting system changes that are likely to significantly increase the number of children who participate in high quality programs. These goals are ambitious but also achievable given the high quality public-private partnership within the State. The State has made a considerable investment in Early Learning Standards for preschool children and that is its strength. The State also established comprehensive, high quality professional development and technical assistance opportunities for Early Childhood Educators and Early Learning and Development programs using the state's Early Learning Standards. The State has also developed mechanisms to certify and support individuals who provide the training and technical assistance on the Early Learning Standards and it is based on these investments that it has selected to focus on (C1) Developing and Using Statewide high quality Early Learning and Development Standards. The State has also chosen to focus on (C2) Supporting Effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems because again it has a strong foundation in each component of the assessment system. It has chosen to address D1 and D2 because in the past year, it has completed a draft Workforce and Competencies for Teacher and Teacher's Assistants and has developed a plan for implementing a comprehensive professional development system. Finally, the State has chosen to address E1 to ensure that the current work moves beyond research and planning to support an effective implementation of kindergarten-entry assessment, which is critical for children with high needs, and E2 because of the critical need to have a comprehensive data system that will enable the State to integrate data so as to be able to inform instruction, plan policy and provide all stakeholders with better quality data. This is a well thought out high quality response and received a score of 20 points.

	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>		

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant has provided strong evidence for a clear alignment and coordination of early learning and development across the State. The leadership and oversight and implementation of the reform plan will be provided by the Early Learning Council and managed by the lead agency, the Department of Education, and the participating State agencies; The Department of Human Services, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and the Department of Health. The State's Early Learning Council is made up of members from both public and private sectors who have been working together to ensure the success of early childhood education in the State prior to the submission of the application. The Council is co-chaired by the Education Commissioner and the Executive Director of Rhode Island's KIDS COUNT, a non-profit public policy and research organization that has led major early childhood initiatives in the State. The applicant has provided a high quality plan demonstrating how participating State agencies as well as other stakeholders will work together to ensure the success of the project. The State has a long history of collaborating across agencies as well as within community partners as is evidenced by the makeup of the council as well as the detailed and enthusiastic letters of support. An organizational chart was provided to demonstrate the overall governance structure. Again the governance system is cross-departmental, includes clear decision-making protocols, is transparent and allows for community involvement. The Early Learning Council will meet six times per year and the work groups and work teams will meet monthly. They will all keep the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge reform at the top of their agendas and will offer public updates on the progress of implantation of the grant to all stakeholders. Each participating agency will have the authority to make decisions for the program and services within its agency. The Early Learning Council will use consensus building to make policy decisions to help ensure the effective implementation of the grant. If disputes should arise that cannot be solved the disputes will go to the participating agency directors and the co-chairs of the Council. If interdepartmental disputes arise they will be resolved by the Education Commissioner and the Secretary of OHHS. The state has also provided MOUs signed by each participating agency indicating their willingness to participate and carry out the scope of work outlined in the memorandum. The State has also demonstrated clear collaborations with its public and private partners as is evidenced by the letters of support. To ensure the ongoing participation of the community, i.e. parents, schools and the like. The State during the implementation of the grant will sponsor forums and focus groups to obtain feedback from parents and families, including children with high needs. The State has provided a high quality plan that is already implemented and that provides an organizational structure that will ensure the success of the project.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant proposed a reasonable plan for using funds beginning in 2012, from federal, state, local and private funding to support Early Learning and Development Systems to better meet the needs of children from high needs communities. The State proposes to align existing resources and use the Early Learning Challenge resources to address gaps and weaknesses in their system with the intent of building a truly high quality early learning system that is integrated and cohesive. The State is committed to aligning all Child Care Development Quality Set Aside resources to support quality improvement goals measured by BrightStars. The State is also committed to aligning professional development resources across sectors to ensure that they are being used effectively and efficiently. The overarching goal of the State is to eliminate duplication of professional development efforts so as to make resources available to support professional development in other critical areas such as infant and toddler development and strengthening cultural and linguistic competency. In addition, the State will also use existing state and local funds to help scale the statewide comprehensive assessment system. School districts are required to implement a comprehensive assessment system in all grades P-12; it is the goal of the state to use the RTT-ELC funds to support the work necessary to engage kindergarten and elementary school teachers as well as experts in the field of Early Childhood Education to identify a high quality assessment system, develop supports for its implementation and then conduct a pilot study. Upon completion of the initial work, full implementation would be paid for primarily with resources from the State. In addition to public state funding, the State will continue to work with philanthropic partners to improve high quality programs for children with high needs. The State has an ongoing relationship with these groups as is evidenced by their enthusiastic letters of support. However, it is unclear from the evidence presented whether or not the those partnerships will be able to provide the resources necessary that will lead to the sustainability of the proposed project at the end of the award. Because the State plans to invest the funds from the RTT-ELC grant to build upon existing programs there is a high possibility of the sustainability of the programs once the funding is completed. The State proposes to seek out additional support during the implementation phase of the project to sustain the increased level of financial incentives, such as scholarships. That said, it is hard to predict how successful this strategy will be, so it is therefore difficult to assess if the incentives can and will be maintained. It is the hope of the State that by 2015 they will have a state of the art infrastructure in place that will increase access to high quality programs for children with high needs.

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 (E)(f)

The applicant has provided a high quality reform plan that is the next step in scaling up its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for all types of childcare that will allow it to assess, improve, and communicate the level and quality of its child care programs to all its stakeholders. The State had already designed and implemented a TQRIS through a joint partnership between its Department of Education, its Department of Human Service, its Department of Children, Youth and Families, its Department of Health and the United Way of Rhode Island. In addition, the State's TQRIS uses a five star rating system and is built on a strong research base, a community input process that included parents, providers, and the effort of public and private partners who have provided the funding for the planning, development, and launch of the BrightStars TQRIS from 2008 to the present. At the present time the State's TQRIS is a voluntary program with approximately 100 participating programs across the State, including child-care centers, Head Start programs and family child care homes. BrightStars is managed and implemented by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Children, under contract with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Furthermore, the Program Standards for BrightStars are tiered standards. Currently, the BrightStars standards do not address "effective data practices" but they do address the five other areas: Early Learning and Development Standards, a Comprehensive Assessment System, Early Childhood Educator qualifications, Family Engagement strategies, and Health promotion practices. As part of its application the State has provided a detailed description of BrightStars Program Standards for Child Care Centers/Preschools, Family Child Care Homes, and School Age Child Care Programs. In addition to the BrightStars TQRIS, the State also possesses three other core set of Program Standards: Child Care Licensing, Basic Education Regulations for regulating preschool programs in public schools, and the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards which were revised and are currently serving children ages 3-6. The standards align with the national pre-k benchmarks, research and evidence-based practice shown to improve educational and developmental outcomes for children. In addition, Early Head Start and Head Start must adhere to federally mandated standards and monitoring. The applicant has provide clear documentation that demonstrates that the BrightStars TQRIS has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence equal to nationally recognized standards that will lead to high quality outcomes for children with high needs. In order to evaluate the BrightStars program standards the State partnered with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at North Carolina at Chapel Hill to oversee a field test of a draft of the standards, to build the capacity of the local agency who would be implementing the standards to collect program quality information fairly and accurately, and to conduct the baseline quality studies. As a result of this work, the State has clear and solid evidence upon which to establish and differentiate between early childhood programs that will serve children with high needs. The State has also provided strong evidence that demonstrates how the BrightStars TQRIS is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs. All programs participating in BrightStars must have a valid, regular license issued by the Department of Children Youth and Families. The current BrightStars Program Standards are closely linked to the State's child-care licensing system. During the pilot phase of BrightStars, the State worked very closely with the National Association for Regulatory Administration to move toward the goal that would require programs to be "in compliance with critical licensing standards" at all levels of BrightStars. By setting the bar high the state would ensure that children and families have access to high quality care. In order to improve upon the current system the applicant proposes under the leadership of the Early Learning Council to revise the BrightStars standards to include critical components of the Department of Child Youth and Families licensing standards and the State's Department of Education Comprehensive Education Standards. As part of this process various accreditation processes used in early learning programs will be considered. The overall process will focus on the improved alignment of standards across departments to develop a coherent quality improvement pathway for center-based early learning settings and family care homes serving young children birth to kindergarten. The revision practices would examine national best practices. It will also review how best to align the Early Learning Standards with new developmental screening and child assessment standards, educator qualification standards, family engagement standards, health promotion practices, and effective data practice standards as the BrightStars TQRIS is revised. Moreover, the State will look to support the use of program and classroom observation tools and look into upgrading infant and toddler standards, working to incorporate indicators of quality reflecting the expanded Early Learning Standards for children ages birth to 3. In addition, staff-child ratio will be reviewed as well as group-size standards and program management standards. Finally licensing standards will be upgraded to incorporate more up to date health and safety information as well as improved monitoring and measurement practices by licensing staff, an area identified as weaknesses for the State. This process will include a core group of stakeholders as well as measurement experts to ensure that the standards are clear and measurable and differentiate high quality. That said, the State does not currently have infant toddler standards which integral to the system, although they have a plan in place to develop or adopt them as part of the proposal. While this is an appropriate next step in addressing the quality of early learning and development for children birth through 3, the State does not provide evidence to address the complexity of developing and implementing infant and toddler standards. More information would have been useful to assess whether the time and monies allocated to complete the work were appropriate. The overarching goal for the State is to provide an aligned high quality system that will provide families and providers with consistent and coherent information. The applicant has provided a thoughtful and high quality plan that will provide high quality programs for children with high needs.

	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)

To date the number of programs that voluntarily participate in the BrightStars TQRIS has increased from 20 in the first year when it was implemented to 100 programs as of October 1, 2011. This represents 10% of early learning programs licensed by the Department of Children, Youth and Families. The State currently encourages voluntary participation in BrightStars by: (1) offering quality improvement grants ranging from \$1000 - \$4500 per site, dependent upon the number of children enrolled. Programs must use these funds to support activities aligned with their quality and improvement plans required in BrightStars and developed in partnership with BrightStar quality improvement specialists; (2) recognizing participating programs through local and statewide releases; (3) celebrating the success of programs at a special event with each participating program being recognized individually and receiving a certificate publicly. In addition, programs are individually recognized for moving up levels within BrightStars;(4) by requiring eligible program that receive Pre-k funding to participate in BrightStars; (5) by requiring childcare and early learning programs receiving grants from the United Way of Rhode Island, a private foundation, to participate in BrightStars;(6) by prioritizing the TEACH scholarship project and the Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund resources to programs participating in BrightStars and (7) by prioritizing enrollment in Rhode Island Early Learning Standards professional development opportunities for individuals employed in programs participating in BrightStars. The State has developed a reasonable, yet ambitious plan using regulatory and funding levers that it believes will dramatically increase the participation of all early learning programs in the revised BrightStars TQRIS. First, Rhode Island will require all licensed programs to participate in BrightStars by assigning one Star to programs at license renewal or when a new license is approved starting in 2013 after the Program Standards are revised in 2012. All licensed programs will automatically receive one star unless they had already been involved in BrightStars and had achieved a higher level. Second, that state will require all licensed programs receiving Department of Health Child Care Assistance program payments to participate in BrightStars. Recognizing the need to maintain parent choice as required by the federal Child Care Block Grant regulations, the State will develop a plan to address this issue, while also addressing programs that are not in compliance with licensing standards. And finally, the State beginning in 2014 will require early learning programs receiving State or federal funding from the Rhode Island Department of Education to participate in BrightStars including IDEA, Part B, Section 619 preschool classroom based programs, Title 1-funded preschool-classrooms and State pre-k programs. Taken together the proposed changes should lead to improved quality across programs serving children and families with high needs. The State has set benchmarks based on careful planning and solid collaborations. That said, the state has provide limited information in the narrative to address how it will handle the large influx of programs into the system during the second phase of the project. The State has provided evidence as part of its proposal for the allocation of funding to support an increase of high quality care for children with high needs.

	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)

Based on a review of the work examining the construction of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems by other states, Rhode Island has outlined a reasonable plan that will entail selecting valid and reliable tools for monitoring programs in the Quality Rating and Improvement System, 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. The current BrightStars assessment process involves reviewing documentation submitted by the program and direct observation using research-based tools and site-visit checklists. As part of the process all programs must complete and submit an application indicating their desired star rating. In addition, they must provide clear documentation indicating that they meet the standards associated with the level for which they are applying. The BrightStars application and documentation requirements were developed in consultation with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Furthermore, as part of the assessment BrightStars uses the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale- Revised (ECERS-R), the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale- Revised (ITERS-R). BrightStars is currently conducting pilot study to inform the future use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This information will provide the foundation for making the decision to include the tool in the State's assessment plan. At the second tier of the TQRIS, unannounced visits are made to the programs. Programs requiring 2 stars receive a visit to verify the structural criteria, such as staff-child ratios, posted staff to child ratios, maximum group size and the like; programs applying for 3 stars or higher receive one or more unannounced site visits includes administration of the ECERS-R and verification of structural criteria. For child care centers and preschools an assessment visit is completed in 33% of the groups or classrooms by age group. Observation visits are completed separately in at least one-third infant/toddler classrooms and in one-third preschool classrooms in early childhood centers or preschools. One single unannounced assessment visit to the home is completed for family child-care programs to verify structural criteria and administer the FCCERS-R. In addition, because high percentage of the population is Spanish speaking most materials have been translated into Spanish to ensure that both providers and families has access to high quality materials. In order to ensure that the assessors are adequately trained and monitored over time as well as to ensure the reliability with the assessments, BrightStars has instituted two levels of training for the staff: one at the anchor level which involves intensive training to reliability on each tool with a high trained staff member from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and completion of a minimum of three reliability check with a state anchor receiving and average reliability score of 85%. Because ongoing inter-rater reliability is important for the ECRS in order to maintain accountability for BrightStar ratings, reliability checks occur during observations when a second assessor is present. The State anchors engage in reliability checks every twentieth assessment of each tool administered. BrightStars standards for reliability include an average of 85% across the last three reliability checks. This is used to ensure that the assessors are used correctly to ensure that providers serving children and families with high needs are doing so at the highest level of quality. BrightStars ratings are valid for three years. In order to maintain a quality rating the programs must submit annual reports to BrightStars. Programs are required to notify BrightStars in writing of any change in their licensing status or accreditation. A program's star rating may be increased, decreased or held at the original level as a result of a requested reassessment with the ultimate goal to maintain the highest level of quality. In order to provide families with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development programs with high quality information the State provides families with access to the BrightStars website which provides information about the quality of programs, provides materials in English and in Spanish, hosts the State's Child Care Resource and Referral Center and employs social media marketing through Facebook and Twitter to share information about quality ratings with parents and other stakeholders. That said, while these venues to ensure that parents have access to information little mention is made as to how to reach families who may be homeless or living in extreme poverty and may not have access to the above mentioned resources. Without these resources some the most vulnerable children would not have access to high quality care. In addition, the Department of Children, Youth and Families does not easily provide information about the program's licensing status or compliance once again posing a barrier for children and families with high needs. That said, the State recognizes this is a problem and has included it in its plan to improve the quality of its Early Education and Development system. To ensure high quality rating and monitoring of the programs in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System the State proposes 1) to build staff capacity to provide ratings for eligible programs at the State moves toward 100% participation of all programs and 2) build capacity of the Department of Children, Youth and Families licensing to inspect licensed family child-care homes at least once a year. Because licensing is one of the foundation markers of quality ensuring that more family child-care homes are licensed and receive a high score on the FCCER-S will provide more families with access to a higher quality of care for their children. Moreover, increasing the quality for family child-care is important because a larger number of low-income and ELL children tend to use the type of care more frequently because of the flexibility it provides making it all the more important to raise and maintain the quality of care.

Available

Score

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 currently has policies and practices in place that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development programs to improve. For example, programs participating in the BrightStars TQRIS identify benchmarks to guide program improvement, to develop a quality improvement plan, and to assess quality and improvement tools and resources. A BrightStars Quality Improvement Specialist provides ongoing guidance and support to participating programs. A partnership has been established between BrightStars and Ready to Learn Providence, funded by the United Way, which provides intensive support and guidance to programs serving concentrations of children with high needs. In addition, within the State are a number of resources to support program quality improvement such as: the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project; the Child Care Support Network; the Child Care Facilities Fund; the Rhode Island Early Childhood Education and Training Project at the Community College of Rhode Island; TEACH Early Childhood Rhode Island and finally the BrightStars Professional Development System. These resources taken together provide support and incentives for continuous improvement. That said, Rhode Island does not possess a tiered reimbursement rate system for child care providers serving families participating in the DHS Child Care Assistance Program. At this time all providers receive same level of reimbursement irrespective of the quality of child care provided. In addition, the rates have been frozen for several years. These problems taken together mean that the children who need high quality care the most do not have access to such care. To address this issue as part of its high quality plan the state will develop and implement a tiered quality incentive payment plan for the Child Care Assistance Program with higher rates being paid to higher quality programs. With this plan the State will improve access to high quality programs for children with high needs. However, it is not clear from the plan how many programs in the lower tiers will improve in quality and because these are program in which a vast majority of children with high needs attend there is a concern that they will be left behind. At the present time the State has a few initiatives in place to provide access and support to aid working families in finding high quality programs for children with high needs. That said, in order to increase the number of high quality programs available the State proposes to strengthen and expand resources available to programs to support continuous quality improvement by developing and offering Program Quality Improvement Contracts to programs seeking to make improvements to move up one or more levels in BrightStars. A vendor will be selected to provide technical assistance and program contracts, focused on environmental enhancements, such as play spaces for children. Professional development, training and technical assistance resources will be expanded statewide to help providers who are serving large concentrations of children with high needs so that they can improve the quality of their program. The State has provided limited information about providing incentives to families to attend meetings or providing access to transportation both of which have been found be a barrier to families of children with high needs in receiving a quality early childhood education. The TEACH scholarship program will be expanded in order to reach a larger proportion of providers interested in seeking higher academic qualifications and programs participating in BrightStars will also receive focused technical assistance to achieve high quality benchmarks, with the priority given to programs that serve larger proportions of children with high needs. Targeted technical assistance will be available in the following areas: Infant/Toddler Network which would build on the work of the existing Child Care Support Network; the Preschool Network which would build on the work of the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project and supports provided to the State pre-k programs; the Family Care Network which would build on the work of Ready to Learn Providence, with a particular focus on Latino family care providers; the Program Administrators Network and the Early Learning Families Network which will build upon the work of the Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund as well as building upon, integrating and supporting the concepts promoted in the infant/toddler and preschool network. The state has presented a thoughtful plan setting targets that are likely to be achieved over the next four years thereby increasing the number of high quality programs available for children and families with high needs. The State has an excellent track record of setting and reaching its goals.

	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 (E)(5)

In 2008 the State worked with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of Carolina at Chapel Hill to oversee and field test the draft of the BrightStars Program Standards to build capacity of the local implementing agency to collect program information fairly and reliably and to conduct baseline quality studies. The findings from the center and preschool field test of the BrightStars standards indicated that the original draft framework, standards and criteria did not work effectively to sort programs into meaningful quality tiers. The FPG Child Development Center made three recommendations which have become the foundation for the proposed plan: 1) reduce the number of criteria measured; 2) adjust the framework criteria; and 3) use the pilot data to test possible revisions to the framework. After a review of the findings the BrightStars steering committee made significant changes to the framework and reduced the number of standards and criteria, focusing only on those criteria that could be fairly and accurately measured and that were strongly associated with child outcomes. Data from the pilot study were used to inform the revisions, with the final criteria reflecting an improved distribution of quality ratings with the NAEYC accredited programs clustered at the upper end. The final 2009 BrightStars framework for centers and preschools includes 22 criteria measuring 9 program-quality standards. This evidence based approach has become the foundation for the next phase of the project which is to validate the effectiveness of BrightStars the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. That said, while the approach is reasonable the proposed evaluation does not include the range of children to be served by the system. Moreover, the state does not address how the child assessment measures will be selected nor does it have a plan in place to evaluate the implementation of the TQRIS. Furthermore, while the State recognizes that evaluation will be costly the timeline presented as part of the proposal does not provide an accurate reflection of the process making it difficult to assess whether the funds allocated are adequate. More information would have been useful in order to assess whether the time allocated or budgeted for was appropriate.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	24

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 State's Early Learning Standards for preschool children were completed in 2003, reflecting the shared understanding and knowledge, skills, and dispositions in eight domains: Approaches to Learning, Language Development and Communication, Literacy, Mathematics, Social- Emotional Development, Science, Physical Health and Development and Creativity. The state included a copy of its standards as part of the the proposal. The Early Learning Standards were originally developed under the guidance of the Early Childhood Task Force who was charged with creating a document based on current education research and practice as well as the priorities of the practitioners within the State. The task force was charged with ensuring the aligning of these policies with the Kindergarten Grade Expectations. At the present time the Standards for children in grades kindergarten through grade 3 are located in multiple academic areas, such as the Common Core Standards for English, Arts & Literacy and History and Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects and Mathematics. A full transition to aligning instruction with the Common Core Standards K-3 is expected in 2014-2015. The Standards are also found in the State's grade-span expectations in the areas of science, engineering and technology, civics and government and historical perspectives and fine arts, beginning with kindergarten. The Rhode Island Standards were piloted in partnership with members of the community to ensure that the learning goals and expectations were appropriate for the target preschool population. Professional development was provided to support the use of the Standards. More recently the system has been upgraded through the development of a technical assistance initiative for programs and through engagement opportunities for families. The system includes: 1) four levels of professional development to meet the diverse needs of professions at different levels in their careers; 2) a partnership with the University of Rhode Island for an opportunity to earn college credit; 3) a cadre of highly skilled experts who provided rigorous competency based training updated yearly to incorporate current research in the field; 5) a strong monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that courses are implemented with fidelity to the original training and content; 6) individualized technical assistance from expert consultants designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and 7) opportunities to engage families in their children's learning and development in ways that are culturally meaningful and relevant through the use of the Family Fun Activity Cards and Trainings. These supports help to promote understanding and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across programs. In addition, the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards work influenced the development of the BrightStars quality rating system program standards and is reflected in the Rhode Island Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards, creating a unified system with common definitions. The Rhode Island Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards call for the alignment of curriculum, child assessment, and family engagement with the Rhode Island Early learning Standards. It also requires training certificates as evidence of teacher and administrator qualifications. Use of the Early Learning Standards has also been integrated into the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state does not currently have infant and toddler standards. However, the applicant has developed a plan to create or adopt a preexisting set of Standards for infants and toddlers (i.e. from another State). This plan is a joint effort between the Department of Education and Department of Human Services. It will be supported by State stimulus funds awarded to the Early Learning Council. That said, because the time required to develop standards versus adopting them is quite different and the cost incurred is also quite different a time line outlining each approach would have been helpful. In addition, each approach might have led to a different allocation of funding for the project. Rhode Island has provided a high-quality plan based on its previously implemented system to expand and update its Statewide high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. The first part of the plan is to update and revise the existing Early Learning Standards for preschool children and develop a set of Early Learning Standard for infants and toddlers. To begin the process an Early Learning Standards Advisory team will be convened. Their job will be to identify existing resources to inform early learning development standards and to finalize and oversee a plan for the Early Learning Standards development. The advisory team will work in conjunction with a research consultant to review the identified resources. The consultant will use the resources to produce a detailed cross-walk in each domain of school readiness, as compared to the high quality criteria identified by the state. At the completion of the cross-walk Standard Development teams in each domain will be formed to strengthen the standards for preschool children and develop the infant and toddler standards. While the state has convened an advisory council limited information was provided as to how the participants would be selected and moreover if incentives would be provided to support parents and family care providers to attend the meetings. More information would have been useful to assess the effectiveness of the proposed strategy. The new State-wide standards will then be used to improve program practices. New professional development and technical assistance opportunities will be designed to support the use the standards in all sectors of the early care and education system, with special attention being paid to ensuring that the needs of children with high needs are met. Rhode Island will also incorporate the new Standards into the program standards, the BrightStars TORIS and the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to ensure that there is reference to the new Standards as the work progresses. It will also develop a process for reviewing and approving published curriculum to ensure that they are aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. As curriculum choices change attention will be paid to cultural and linguistic relevance with ongoing professional development within this area to ensure that the needs from diverse communities are being met. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment will begin after the new Early Learning and Development Standards are complete in order to ensure the alignment between the systems and finally the Fun Activities for Families will be used to systemically engage families and providers working with families to support the early learning of children, particularly those with high needs. The applicant has proposed a very thoughtful high-quality plan that is the next step in improving quality in an already implemented system that will go a long way in meeting the needs children and families.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The State does not currently have a high quality Comprehensive Assessment System and is proposing to develop one. The State has a strong foundation upon which to build such as system, such as its regular access to developmental screening, its use of formative assessments, its measures of environmental quality and its measures of teacher-child interactions. The goals of the proposed plan are to develop professional development to support widespread use of the Comprehensive Assessment system and to align and integrate assessments statewide so as to avoid duplication. The key activities would be to: 1) develop and implement a variety of professional development opportunities aligned with Rhode Island's Workforce and Knowledge Competencies Framework to support improved knowledge and competencies in early childhood assessment by Early Childhood Educators; 2) support the use of common, developmentally appropriate, valid and reliable screening instruments statewide; 3) increase the number of children birth through five who are screened, 4) increase access to follow-up services in urban communities for children with high needs; 5) using Teaching Strategies GOLD across all programs receiving federal and state funding and finally provide incentives to private programs to use Teaching Strategies GOLD by incorporating these programs under the State license and State rate and including the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD into the upper levels of the Tiered QRIS for all programs. While the state has included several measures to assess outcomes for the preschool population it has provided no information on infant and toddler assessments. These measures are necessary to ensure a comprehensive system. Furthermore, as part of its plan the state proposes to have public information awareness campaign regarding the importance of regular screening for children. More information about how this plan fits within the Comprehensive Assessment plan would have been useful in order to assess its effectiveness for children with high needs. In general, the proposed plan is a high-quality plan that has yet to be implemented but when it is will allow the State to provide a coherent and cohesive system of data to support the needs of children so that they can begin school ready to learn.

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	18

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant has provided a high quality proposal to improve the quality of the workforce over the next four years. Rhode Island began to develop a Workforce and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Educators in 2001. In 2007 a second committee was convened to revise the draft in light of changes in the field, such as new research and regulations, ongoing development of State initiatives and new NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate practice guidelines. The group made several significant design changes to the original document to allow for greater specificity regarding what professionals should know and do in relation to their role and type of program within which they worked. The updates and improvements included 1) separate competencies for center-based, family child-care, and school age workforces; 2) separate competencies for teachers, teacher assistants, education coordinators and administrators; 3) shifting the lattice from six levels to four and 4) aligning the competencies with Blooms Taxonomy. The overall goal of the proposal is build upon the previous work to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of aligned credentials. While the approach is reasonable the state has provided a limited description about the overall process involved in accomplishing this goal. The state has completed a comprehensive set of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for teachers and teacher assistants. The plan is to create an addendum to teacher competencies for special educators and early intervention professionals, develop competencies for family childcare, develop competencies for program administrators and education coordinators, develop competencies for professional-development providers for higher education, review existing teacher-preparation program curricula against Core Competencies Frameworks, conduct a higher education alignment summit and complete higher education alignment. The State has partnered with a number of higher education institutions to ensure the successful completion of alignment of credentials and degrees. While this is an appropriate logical step the state has provided limited information about the process involved in attaining alignment. More evidence would have been useful in order to assess the feasibility of the proposed plan. The proposed plan is a thoughtful comprehensive plan that will increase the number of quality providers in Early Childhood field.

	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 applicant has provided a high quality plan that will support Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills and credentials. At the present time the State does not have a statewide Workforce Competency framework and therefore the professional development system has been disorganized and somewhat inconsistently delivered across the workforce. The applicant has provided a robust plan that will address the lack of quality in the professional development provided to early childhood educators statewide. As part of the proposal the State is proposing to provide and expand access to effective professional opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. In addition, the state will provide a continuum of supports that will promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway and that is designed to increase retention of staff and finally the applicant will collect and publicly report aggregated data on early childhood educator development, advancement and retention. In order to increase the availability and accessibility of high quality professional development that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework the state will review current professional development offerings to see if they align with the competency framework. It will cross reference the offerings so that educators can easily identify that professional development is related to specific content with one or more standards. It will design and implement a process for approval of training content. It will identify professional development gaps and search for or adopt high quality, aligned professional development resources from other states or national training centers and it will create and widely promote the information on approved professional development. All of these strategies together will improve the knowledge and skills of the workforce which will improve the quality of programs for children. In order to provide opportunities for professional development and encourage the use of

multiple delivery systems the State proposes to promote the Resource Center as a centralized location for professional development information, increase the number and frequency of current offerings of "approved professional development", create new "approved professional development" to address the gap in areas identified as "high need", take a comprehensive approach to career advising, expand peer support networks, incorporate workforce professional development indicators into BrightStars, ensure high-quality professional development opportunities for Spanish speaking providers, expand access to Early Childhood Specialist program with mentoring and recruitment of Spanish-speaking providers and finally to create a mandatory pre-service health and safety training for all license-exempt educators participating in the childcare subsidy program. To provide a continuum of supports throughout the career and increase retention the state is proposing expand the TEACH program using the RTT funding and explore alternative pathways for earning college credit and teacher certification. While the expansion of scholarships with the RTT is a good thing to do, the state does not have a solid plan in place as to how to sustain the monies for the expanded scholarships once the grant is over. Such a plan would have been useful. Moreover, the state has budgeted for the cost of tuition to remain at the same level over the four years, yet that is not likely as tuition in most colleges tends to increase each year. An estimated increment per year would have been appropriate in order to have a better sense of the cost. Finally, the state does not currently have a database or workforce registry for the early learning field. The state proposes to use the RTT funding to address this gap. As part of the plan the state will conduct a "professional workforce" study and publicly report findings. It will create a workforce registry as part of the shared Rhode Island Early Learning Data System and finally it will produce and distribute annual reports to the Early Learning workforce. Based on the high quality plan proposed by the state if the goals are met and implemented the quality of the workforce will increase which will have a direct effect on the access to quality programs available to children with high needs. The benchmarks set by the state seem reasonable given the lack of baseline data available.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The applicant has developed a sophisticated plan in order for the state to understand the status of children's learning and development at the kindergarten entry. Rhode Island does not currently have a system in place to implement a common statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment but has developed a high quality plan to move them forward in this direction. The State is committed to developing a comprehensive system that is aligned with the nationally benchmarked standards that will provide data to inform curriculum and instruction decisions at the State, LEA, school, and program levels. The goals of the comprehensive assessment system at the PreK-12 level is to increase student learning by producing data that will inform the learning process, be used to evaluate programs to ensure that all students are making progress toward achieving learning and developmental outcomes. This goal aligns directly with the RTT-ELC competition which has as one of its criteria to implement kindergarten-entry assessments statewide that will provide information across all domains of early learning and development, inform the efforts to close the school readiness gap, and inform instruction in the early elementary-school grades. In addition, the Rhode Island Department of Education has identified three general purposes of assessment in its focus on Comprehensive Assessment Systems: 1) to inform and improve

instruction: 2) to screen or identify for intervention, and 3) to measure outcomes as part of an accountability system, for school-improvement planning or evaluation. As part of the plan to assist districts in the development of a Comprehensive Assessment System the Department of Education developed a document entitled "Comprehensive Assessment System: Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance" with the purpose of the document to outline the elements and features of a comprehensive system. While the state does not have a full comprehensive system Rhode Island does have a number of foundational pieces in place that can be built upon to develop a common system that can be used to inform instruction and evaluate statewide, district level, community and child outcomes. In addition to a strong focus on developing assessment systems to inform and improve instruction the need for a Kindergarten Entry Assessment was identified during the State's comprehensive early childhood data systems planning effort. The Early Learning Data System Action Plan, a byproduct of this effort, identified working to develop a statewide kindergarten entry assessment system as one of its next steps with the goal of supporting kindergarten instruction. The state has proposed a high-quality plan to develop a Kindergarten Entry Assessment and aligns with and expands upon the recommendations approved by the Early Learning Council. The key activities that will support the state's goal are to: 1) develop or identify a valid, reliable and appropriate Kindergarten Assessment and plan to implement by school year 2014-2015; 2) to develop clear policies and procedures to ensure effective and appropriate use of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment data; 3) to design comprehensive supports for kindergarten teachers and school administrators to ensure valid and reliable implementation of the Kindergarten Assessment and 4) to pilot and implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment by school year 2014-2015 with a plan to scale-up based on the results of the pilot study. As part of the process the council will identify a core Kindergarten Assessment planning team to review the current research in the field and the national trends in assessment issues. The team will be comprised of a number experts, community members, parents, teachers and other stakeholders to ensure that all voices are present and heard with respect to assessment issues. The budget for this grant will be limited to the costs to develop and identify kindergarten entry assessment and develop supports to ensure valid and reliable implementation. The implementation of the requirements will come from the education funding formula from the state and have not been included in the grant. The applicant has developed a high-quality proposal that will ensure that children with high needs will have a smooth transition from preschool into kindergarten. That said, although the applicant provides a timeline indicating when each proposed phase would take place and the activities to be involved more specific information would have been helpful. For example, more information about how long it would actually take to pilot test the kindergarten entry assessment would have allowed one to assess whether enough time had been allocated for proper implementation.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The applicant has proposed a high quality plan that will build upon and enhance the early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. Rhode Island is currently implementing two major federal grant efforts: 1) the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant and 2) the Race to the Top (K-12) grant. Both of these efforts are having an impact and improving the data infrastructure within the Department of Education. Currently in Rhode Island, key data about young children, in early learning programs and within the early childhood workforce is stored in six databases managed by four separate State departments and one nonprofit organization. To date the State has very little data on children participating in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, limited data on children who are not participating in government funded programs, no centralized data system for children's developmental screenings, limited child assessment information for children enrolled in early learning programs, no state-wide child assessment information for children at kindergarten entry, and limited information about the quality of programs. In addition, there is also limited information about early childhood educators working in early childhood programs. The key goals of the proposed plan is to create a governance structure and data oversight process that will ensure share planning, access, and use of the Early Learning Data System across state departments, by early learning intermediate organizations, and early learning programs. The second goal is to expand the Department of Education's State Longitudinal Data System and build a strong link to the Department of Health's KIDSNET database to track information on young children's participation and attendance in early learning programs, their learning and development, the early learning programs and classrooms as well as the early learning workforce. In addition, the state proposes to expand the KIDSNET

database to track information on children's developmental screening and follow-up action. And finally, the state proposes to build and infrastructure to track data on young children's development and learning from birth to kindergarten entry, including the development and implementation of a statewide common formative child assessment system during the early childhood years and at entry into kindergarten. That said the state has not provided an overall plan to evaluate how the requirements will be implemented. In addition, it would have been useful to see more information as to how this new system would be explained to families in order to ensure that parents have access to this information in a way that is useful and relevant. This is a well thought and ambitious plan that will provide access to high quality care for young children with high needs.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	233

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The state has developed a high quality plan to include all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. A core priority of the state is to increase the access to high quality early learning programs for children with high needs by ensuring that more programs are in the top tiers of quality (4 and 5 stars) when rated by BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System. A parallel goal for the State is to decrease the number of low quality programs. In order to reach those goals the State's reform plan proposes to include all licensed and state regulated Early Learning and Development programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Bringing all early learning programs into one program-quality measurement and improvement system will provide several benefits. It will help parents to understand all of the program-enrollment options for children at various ages and allow them to review the quality of those programs based on an independent, valid and reliable assessment of quality. It will dramatically expand the access to real-time data so that State leaders can better understand the barriers to program-quality improvement and disparities in the early learning systems and develop appropriate plans for addressing them. And finally, it will help improve coordination and collaboration among community-based programs and public school based programs to ensure better communication as well as sharing of resources to improve quality. BrightStars is a joint partnership across a number of public and private agencies. The state has built an excellent foundation and working relationship across the agencies. The state will build upon this foundation to ensure that all early learning and development programs in the state participate in and benefit from the BrightStars TQRIS as well as make significant progress in achieving high quality standards that will lead to better outcomes for children with high needs. In order to ensure improvement in quality the state will require all early learning and improvement programs to participate in the BrightStars TQRIS. Child care licensing will be aligned within the BrightStars framework. The Department of Education Approval Standards, licensing standards, and BrightStars Program Standards will also be aligned in order to be more efficient in terms of staffing and clarity on what the ratings mean in terms of program quality across different approval and assessment processes. And finally, there will be a clear way to inform parents when a program has a Department of Education Approval for preschool classrooms as well as BrightStars. As the system moves to one in which all programs are required to participate in BrightStars, the state will validate the quality and levels within the five star system. This will enable the state to make revisions in the standards as needed to ensure the validity of levels in terms of the quality and the impact on child outcomes across all domains of development. Professional development, training and technical assistance resources will be expanded statewide to help programs serving large numbers of children with high needs to make the necessary quality improvements so as to meet the higher-quality BrightStars benchmarks. Rhode Island will also expand provider access to higher education by expanding the TEACH scholarship program to serve more early childhood educators seeking to improve their academic credentials. In addition, Rhode Island will implement tiered quality enhancement payments with programs with higher levels of quality receiving higher payments. This new system will provide access to more high quality programs for children and families with high needs. Furthermore, Rhode Island will work closely with National Alliance Regulatory Administration to strengthen licensing practices and

policies of programs. The state's primary goals over the next four years will be to update center and family care regulations, upgrade licensing inspection, monitoring and enforcement strategies, increase the frequency of inspections of family child-care homes to at least once a year, integrate data collection for licensing with the new Rhode Island Early Learning Data system so that it is more accessible, and establish a system to share compliance information with families and the public through the internet. The state has a high quality plan that when implemented will lead to an increase in the number of high quality programs serving the needs of high needs children. That said as the state seeks to increase scholarship opportunities it has not addressed the increase of tuition which may preclude early childhood educators from going to school because the scholarship might not cover the cost thereby not increasing the qualification of those in the workforce. More information would have been helpful to address this issue. In addition, as the state proposes to raise the quality of its programs at the top tiers leaving out those at the lower end of the continuum presents a risk to those families who have children with high needs as there is tendency for families with children with high needs to use these programs.

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

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



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # RI-5033

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 2:29 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	17
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(1)

A1a Tables A1-1-13 are completed. Proposal indicates that while 'Rhode Island dramatically increased its investment in the child-care subsidy program between 2000 and 2006.' Table A1-4 shows variable funding levels in the different types of investment areas, from highs in 2007 to decreases, some stable (ie Part C), funding has not been robust, and has there been consistent steady increases. In some cases there have been decreases in funding. For example Total State contributions went from \$70.6 million in 2007 to \$42.1 million in 2011. This history of funding is a concern. For example the applicant indicates they have had reduced funding for the Child Care Subsidy Program and Head Start programs in 2007 and 2008, but recently state funding for early learning programs stabilize - with a stronger focus on quality. 'Funding for the State Pre-K program, as a categorical program in the school funding formula, will start to flow in State FY 2013 and will ultimately expand over ten years to \$10 million per year, serving 1,100 children in full-day (6 hour), high quality State Pre-K programs in Rhode Island's highest need communities.' A1b Table A 1-1, 2, 3 identifies low income, special populations and different learning program types. In the narrative the application presents information on infants/toddlers in one table by learning programs and another table for preschoolers. Both tables have a large percent of unknown. This supports the States proposal for an increasingly accurate data system. The Nurse family partnership home visiting program currently serving 100 families will increase to 225 due to a grant expansion. The proposal indicates that in 2007 'eligibility for child-care assistance was reduced from 225 percent to 180 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.' The Rhode Island Early Learning Council recognizes that it is important to restore eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy Program back to 225 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. It is a key strategy to increase access for children with high needs, and has recommended an interim strategy of implementing differential entrance and exit eligibility standards. There is little information on the specific learning needs of populations of children of high needs, such as homeless, that the applicant has identified in Table A1-2. A1c The application indicates that the legislation from 1987 requires all children to be screened at school entry, but the state does not currently collect the data' and indicates that the State is committed to change this. In 2007 State legislation passed for a voluntary quality rating system, in 2008 the Pre-school education act and in 2010, the R.I. General Assembly enacted an education funding formula. This indicates in the last few years increased work has been

done by the State in the area of preschool needs. A1d The proposal indicates that RI has developed a foundation to build on reforms. This includes 1) history of collaborative governance, 2) focus on improving child outcomes across all domains of child development, 3) attention to early learning and development standards, 4) a commitment to improving the knowledge and competencies of the workforce, and 5) focus on improving program quality. Early Learning and Development Standards, currently using those developed in 2003, but will be undergoing revision. Comprehensive Assessment Systems include aligning RI Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) with American Association of Pediatricians recommendations. Collaboration is with RI Dept of Health. For children age 3-5 developmental screening universally is available through school Child Outreach program. Data indicate that 63% of eligible population is screened: goal is 80%, which is reachable. The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project has been aligning assessment with learning goals. Rhode Island chose the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, (recently revised version), to assess child outcomes. All school districts are using this program. BrightStars, the State's tiered quality-rating and improvement system for early learning programs, has a set of standards that are aligned across state department (including the Early Learning Standards and state child care licensing) and includes 3 environment rating scales to assess the quality of early childhood environments applying for a star rating. Proposal indicates that CLASS is used as well as Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Mathematics and Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition. Health promotion practices - 'currently 93.5 percent of Rhode Island's children have health insurance coverage. RItte Care provides comprehensive health benefits to children up to 250 percent of poverty and parents up to 175 percent of poverty Rhode Island's Child Care Support Network enhances the availability of high-quality child care for all children, including children with special health-care needs, by building partnerships with child-care professionals, providing individual and peer support, facilitating connections with community resources. Child care health consultation is available to all licensed programs and child mental health consultants provide onsite consultation. Family engagement model from EHS and HS will be used to develop the State Plan's model. This is a strength as it is a high quality model. EC educators - In 2010, Rhode Island established the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarship model and is in the process of completing a Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WKC) framework with a four-level Career Lattice for Early Childhood Teachers and Teacher Assistants. Final competencies for each role are anticipated by December 2011. Rhode Island does not currently have a statewide, common Kindergarten Entry Assessment. (KEA) in place, but the need was clearly identified during Rhode Island's comprehensive early childhood data-systems planning effort, a part of the National Governors Association Ready States Initiative, which began in April 2010. Data Rhode Island has two universal data warehouses (the State Longitudinal Data System, managed by the R.I. Department of Education, and KIDSNET, the universal newborn screening and public health data system, managed by the R.I. Department of Health) upon which a comprehensive early childhood data system will be built. Currently, RI has six separate databases managed by four separate State departments and one nonprofit organization and they have identified the great need for integration and easier accessibility. The State has provided information supporting the work that has been done in the past in order to be prepared for the work to develop the next steps. The score is based on a high quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

A2a The proposal has identified goals in response to this application, to be met by Dec. 31, 2015. The State has identified 3 goal areas: 1) program quality, 2) improving child outcomes, and 3) closing the readiness gap. Within these goals are the RTT required performance standards. For example, Program participation in the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant has provided information on all of the specific populations of Children with High Need identified in Table A1-2. All the goals are appropriate for this grant. They are ambitious and achievable with the appropriate structure. A2b *Core systems change will include: 1) All licensed and publicly funded early learning programs will be in one common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, TQRIS, BrightStars, 2) Promoting access to high quality programs achieved primarily through investments in increased quality of existing programs, by changing from voluntary TQRIS to a program linked with licensing and funding with targeted quality supports, 3) The ultimate goal is to 'improve outcomes for children in order to close the readiness gap that exists at kindergarten entry', by updating the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards, providing professional development to align with the Standards, and expand the use of a comprehensive assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD, 4) Expand screening developmental, early literacy and social emotional development needs by working with Department of Health and community based programs for children not in early learning programs. *Great workforce development - The proposal has identified key investments that will significantly increase the capacity of the State's professional development system to improve the knowledge and

competencies of the early childhood workforce and ensure that people have the ability to move up a career lattice. They include alignment and expansion of programming. Specifically addressing the Children with High Needs, are 'key investments that will significantly increase the capacity of the State's professional-development system to improve the knowledge and competencies of the early childhood workforce and ensure that people have the ability to move up a career lattice'; 'Build and strengthen cultural and linguistic competencies throughout the system'; and 'build skills and competencies for individuals working with infants and toddlers' However, the children in the migrant population have additional needs to cultural and linguistic issues, and the other populations of children with high needs have not been specifically identified. This is a weakness in the proposal. *Measuring outcomes and progress. The proposal includes attention to ongoing tracking of progress and monitoring of outcome for programs, children, the workforce, and the overall system, through 3 key appropriate projects: 1. the early learning data system, 2. formative child-assessment system, and 3. the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). The State workplan is appropriate for the needs and has the potential to address the identified needs. A2c The proposal has identified the following Focused investment areas: (C)(1) Developing and using statewide high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards, (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems, (D)(1) Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials, (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators, and (E)(2) Building an Early Learning Data System. In all of them the Proposal has presented clear rationales to justify these selections. For example in C2 the State has a variety of assessments, but they indicate the needs to create a comprehensive system. They have shown how the areas will build upon work the State has done to build quality programs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

A3a1 Leadership and grant management will be provided by Rhode Island Early Learning Council and managed by the Lead Agency, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE), and the Participating State Agencies: the R.I. Department of Human Services; the R.I. Department for Children, Youth, and Families; and the R.I. Department of Health. The work of the Council is directly aligned with the grant goals. Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities clearly identified the agencies and their roles and responsibilities with this grant. The identified agencies provide the ability to develop comprehensive State systems. A3a2 The Early Learning Council, meets six times per year, the Work Group 8 times, and the eight Work Teams, which will meet monthly will keep the implementation of the reform strategies at the top of the agenda and will provide public updates on grant progress including sponsoring periodic public forums. MOUs are in place with all of the key members. The Scope of Work descriptions attached to the MOUs for each of the Participating State Agencies include the set of activities that each agency will implement under this grant and describe efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become participating Programs. An organizational chart is included in proposal. A weakness appears to be that representatives for children in foster care and victims of abuse, homeless, migrant or those living on Indian Lands have not been clearly identified as participants. It is not clear who will be representing these constituents and how much weight their input be given. A3a3 The proposal indicates that Agency representatives can make decisions: the group will use consensus style decision making. If there are disputes, 'they will go to the Participating State Agency directors and the Co-Chairs of the Early Learning Council for shared discussion, further input as needed, and resolution.' A3a4 The proposal indicates that the 'Early Learning Council includes leaders from the full array of Rhode Island's early learning and development programs' but it is not clear regarding the weight of their input in decision making. The role of parents/parent advocates on the Council is not clear. The proposal indicated that there will be 'forums and focus groups to obtain input and feedback from parents and families, including parents of children with high needs' and that Council representatives will meet periodically with a variety of programs and agencies. There is no specific mention of groups concerned/focused on the needs of children who are homeless, in foster care or victims of abuse. A3b1, 2, 3 Appendix 12 contains the fully executed MOUs between RIDE and each Participating State Agencies along with their scope of work and appropriate signatures. A3c1 The proposal indicates that they have 'the full support of every key early learning intermediary organization in the state' and listed the groups, in Appendix 13. Table A3-2 shows some Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils. A3c2 The proposal indicates that 62 individual agency and other stakeholder letters are included in Appendix 14. It did not appear that there were letters from persons/agencies representing the needs of children who are homeless, in foster care or victims of abuse.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

A4a The applicant presents information on the systems, programs and other resources in this section. The proposal indicates, 'Rhode Island will align all Child Care Development Fund Quality Set Aside resources to support our quality improvement goals measured by Brightstar'. The proposal shows that philanthropic partners will continue to provide support during the grant years. A4b1 The proposal indicates that the developed 'budget reflects consensus among the Participating State Agencies as well as each agency's commitment to sustainability'. They are proposing a balance of infrastructure investments and high-impact quality improvement investments in order to provide programs serving Children with High Needs. The budget appears to be adequate. A4b2 Costs appear to be reasonable. A4b3 Table (A)(4) – 1 identifies the Federal, State, private, and local funds that will be used to achieve the outcomes identified in the State Plan. The proposal appears to be consistent with the State plan. The proposal identifies that the plan to align existing resources and use Early Learning Challenge resources to address gaps and weaknesses in the system to leverage all the work to build a comprehensive, high-quality early learning system. A4C Efforts being worked on for sustainability include: 1) restore Child Care Assistance Program to serve children in low-income working families with incomes up to 225% of the poverty level, and to maintain state funding for Head Start. 2) The Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children with Child Welfare Involvement Grant will provide targeted support to establish and improve state infrastructure and collaboration between child welfare and the early education system. This will expand enrollment of foster infants and young children into comprehensive, high-quality early care and education programs. 3) make all children under 3 with a substantiated case of child abuse and neglect categorically eligible for IDEA Part C services. If this is an action that will occur or is hoped for it is not clear, and the results will impact long term funding, thus this is a concern for children with high need for whom the funding is needed. The proposal indicates, that Rhode Island Early Learning Council will work to get the additional fiscal supports needed to sustain the level of financial incentives after the grant period ends. If these initiatives will support the sustainability is not clear. The sustainability issue is a concern for this proposal. The applicant has addressed all the identified criterion. Scoring used the high quality response.

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)

B1a1-6 Rhode Island's over-arching goal is to have more Children with High Needs in high-quality early learning programs. Table B1-1, which identifies the Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State indicates that only the RI Department of Education is using 6 of the program standard elements that are identified in this RTT grant application. Brightstar RI's TQRIS is currently voluntary, with 100 participating programs approximately 10% of programs. With the exception of effective data practices, the other 5 components are in place. In addition cultural and linguistic competency is addressed. Brightstars is a joint partnership with other key agencies involved in this grant proposal. The timeline, key activities and milestones for this aspect of the grant are to be achieved in the first 2 years, with most of the work in the first year. This appears to be overly ambitious as Table B1-1 shows that many of the programs in the State are not yet using them and this will necessitate changing ways that things are done, learning new ways of framing work, using new forms and assessments and reporting. B1b A copy of the tiered Program Standards are found in Appendix 15 – BrightStars Child Care Center and Preschool Quality Framework; Appendix 16 – BrightStars Family Child Care Quality Framework; and, Appendix 17 – BrightStars School-Age Child Care (K-5) Quality Framework. Pilot testing of the standards with support of FPG Child Development has occurred. The FPG Institute at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill findings support the fact that BrightStars is effective at differentiating the quality of programs. B1c The Linkage with State licensing is planned. These plans include activities such as: developing systems to determine how the State was going to measure "compliance with licensing" as the foundation of the BrightStars quality levels, and crosswalk work of a Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards will be coordinated with Department for Children,

Youth, and Families (DCYF) licensing and BrightStar for children ages 3-6. Appendix 18 identified the Crosswalk of Rhode Island Program Standards with RTT-ELC Focus Areas. BrightStars Program Standards are closely linked to the State's child-care licensing system which licenses all child-care centers, family child-care homes, center-based Head Start programs, and private preschools and nursery schools in the State. Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State shows that not all programs address all elements. The proposal identifies the 3 goals for adopting a common statewide TQRSIS. They include re-design and clarify the roles and responsibilities of DCYF, RIDE. Use of BrightStars regarding program-quality measurement and monitoring to improve effectiveness and efficiency, ensure alignment, eliminate duplicate assessments, and streamline the process for participating programs. The State acknowledges that learning standards for infants and toddlers are in process. As indicated the time frame presented for the accomplishment of the key activities may not be sufficient to implement the desired changes and therefore a weakness to the plan that is robust. The scoring used the high quality partially implemented rubric.

	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)
B2a1-6 The proposal indicates that RI will make changes to require all licensed programs to participate in BrightStars by assigning One Star to programs at license renewal and when a new license is approved, starting in 2013, with the goal of full participation by 2015. Rhode Island will require participation in BrightStars as a condition for licensed programs receiving DHS Child Care Assistance Program payments. This clear shift in the work is a major systems change. Starting in 2014, Rhode Island will require early learning programs receiving State or federal funding from RIDE to participate in BrightStars (including IDEA, Part B Section 619 preschool classroom-based programs, Title I-funded preschool-classroom programs, and State Pre-K programs). Early learning programs operated by public schools would be expected to receive the RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Approval on a prescribed timeline. Rhode Island has identified all of the categories required for this grant submission to participate in a timely manner. B2b The emphasis has been placed on supporting the programs. Often when programs increase their quality levels, there is an increase in program cost. There is no indication about this concern or how families will be supported if this occurs. B2c The target end of grant goal is 100% of program participation in TQRIS, which appear to be extremely ambitious. For example Table B2c identifies that there are 933 programs receiving CCDF funds. The baseline indicates that currently 86 are participating in the TQRIS, with the expectation that all 933 will participate by 2015. Scoring rubric used was high quality partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

B3a The proposal has presented information on how they have developed a voluntary TQRIS to date, including monitor training, establishing and maintaining inter-rater reliability and the monitoring process, including frequency. These elements are in keeping with the development of a system that is valid and reliable. BrightStars does not yet address effective data practices, so the TQRIS is partially implemented. Two goals have been presented for this component, 1: Build the staff capacity of BrightStars to provide ratings for all eligible programs as the State moves to 100-percent participation and 2: Build the capacity of DCYF licensing to inspect licensed family child-care homes at least once per year. These two goals will require increased development of infrastructure to coordinate with licensing as participation in the TQRIS requires licenses. B3b Information to parents is currently provided in a number of ways including: 'the www.BrightStars.org, the QRIS Web site; through a searchable website hosted by the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA); social media marketing through Facebook and Twitter, information posted in daycare homes and facilities, and parent cards in English and Spanish.' It is not clear if the social media information or the information on the two websites is in Spanish as well as English. The proposal indicates that licensing compliance data are not currently entered into a computer system, but that this is anticipated as early as 2012. The timeline, key activities and milestones identified all appear to be appropriate, with the exception of review, strengthen, and improve efficiency of monitoring practices and systems which is identified for 1 year only. It is not clear if a robust evaluation of this kind would take more than 1 year to develop, implement and analyze. The information presented on supporting Children with High Needs focuses on English language learners. There is no mention of the other Children with High Needs populations that are identified in this proposal, for example children who are homeless. The scoring is based upon the high quality, partially implemented rubric.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

B4a The proposal has identified a number of resources, specifically: The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project; The Child Care Support Network; The Child Care Facilities Fund; The Rhode Island Early Childhood Education & Training Project at the Community College of Rhode Island; T.E.A.C.H., Early Childhood Rhode Island; and BrightStars Professional Development System, all of which will be used to support and promote access. The proposal has identified 3 goals to support the implementation and improvement, all of which directly relate to promoting access to higher quality programs. They are Goal 1: Develop and implement tiered quality incentive payments for the Child Care Assistance Program with higher rates paid to higher-quality programs; Goal 2: Strengthen and expand the resources available to programs to support continuous quality improvement and

Goal 3: Provide focused technical assistance to realign quality-improvement resources to meet the needs of early learning programs, with priority given to programs that serve greater proportions of Children with High Needs. The foundation identified presents a robust approach. The identification of the programs serving Children with High Needs is not clear. B4b The section on supporting working families identifies a tiered reimbursement-rate system for Rhode Island's Child Care Assistance Program to help families access higher-quality care, as higher rates would be paid to higher-quality programs, thus making serving these clients more financially attractive for programs. There is no indication about additional supports to the families, for example family support services, transportation, etc. B4c1 Table (B)(4)(c)(1) identifies: Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. B4c2 Table (B)(4)(c)(2) identifies: Increasing 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. Both of these tables indicate ambitious plans, but there is no indication regarding the increased staffing that will be needed for monitoring the increased licensing requirements to move from a baseline of 93 programs in 2011 to 255 in 2012 to 1,079 in 2015. This is a concern due to the large number of programs involved. It is not clear how the programs serving Children with High Needs will identify them. For example, will there be criteria or forms to fill out to report how many children who are homeless are being served. The scoring for this section uses the partially implemented rubric.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

B5a The proposal identifies the work done with FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill on a field test of the draft BrightStars Program Standards in 2008. However the field test did not include the use of Environmental Rating Scales, which are an important component of standards. This field test was with centers and preschools, but not family child care. It also used measurements with no indication of their validity or reliability. From information presented in B1 it appears that the pilot used 75 randomly selected programs. Information in section B5 identifies center and preschool programs but no information on family child care programs appears to be included. The proposal identifies the goal for validation work as 'Work with an independent evaluator to conduct a study of BrightStars to validate its effectiveness at differentiating the quality of programs and to compare children's learning and development for those enrolled in lower-tier programs vs. higher-tier programs.' The proposal indicates that the study will occur from 2014-2015 with findings released in the final year of the grant. There is no indication of the anticipated design. This is an extremely important study which the proposal has only allocated a very short time frame, making it questionable as to its effectiveness. B5b The research design is not clear. There is no indication of the composition of programs to be evaluated. The outcome measures of 'Children's learning and development will be tracked using measures for social skills (such as the Social Skills Rating System) and language and literacy (such as the Peabody Picture/Vocabulary Test or the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement) do not include social emotional assessments, or assessments appropriate for infants/toddlers. While the proposal states 'Programs serving Children with High Needs will participate in the study' there is no indication of which populations will be included and how they will be identified. It is not clear if the assessments are appropriate for the child's language of origin.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>C1a The proposal identifies 3 key goals for developing standards. They are: Goal 1: Update and revise the existing Rhode Island Early Learning Standards for preschoolers; Goal 2: Develop a set of Early Learning Standards for Infants and Toddlers, and Goal 3: Use statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards to improve program practice. The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards for preschool age children were completed in 2003, and they reflect a shared understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in eight domains: Approaches to Learning, Language Development and Communication, Literacy, Mathematics, Social-Emotional Development, Science, Physical Health and Development, and Creativity. Table A1-6 indicates that the state has school readiness domains for preschool but not for infants or toddlers. An Advisory Team that includes a wide range of representatives, for example, include infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten teachers, special education personnel, program administrators, parents, individuals with knowledge of English Learners and Children with High Needs; and representatives from higher education. However, there is no indication of the selection process, criteria or if incentives are provided for participants such as parents and family child care providers. There is no indication if the work done was developed with regards to cultural or linguistically appropriateness. C1b The proposal indicates that a transition aligning instruction with the Common Core Standards in the K-3 grades is anticipated by 2014-15. Appendix 21 provides a Common Core Transition Timeline. The Early Learning Standards are not currently aligned with the K-3 grades standards. C1c Rhode Island will incorporate the new Early Learning and Development Standards into program standards, the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, and the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks. The work on Infant/Toddler Standards is still in the development phase as indicated in this section and Section B1. This work has not been implemented. C1d Rhode Island's key activities are to: 1) ensure that revised program standards and Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks incorporate the new Early Learning and Development Standards; 2) develop a process to approve curriculum resources aligned with the new standards; 3) ensure that assessment instruments being developed or identified align with the new Early Learning and Development Standards; 4) develop professional-development and technical-assistance opportunities to support the use of the new Early Learning and Development Standards; and 5) expand the capacity to provide information on the new Early Learning and Development Standards to families. The timeline, key activities and milestones table identifies multiple steps involving multiple agencies and inputs, all under the responsibility of the Rhode Island Department of Education. For the amount of work presented, there is no indication of structure of the Advisory team to successfully monitor and implement this work. The scoring for this section uses the high quality, partially implemented rubric.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	23
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p>		

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

C2a The proposal identifies 3 goals for this section: Goal 1: Provide Professional Development Opportunities to Develop Reliability in Child Assessment and to Support the Use of Assessment Data to Inform Practice; Goal 2: Expand the Use of Teaching Strategies GOLD in Early Learning Programs; and Goal 3: Increase Developmental Screening Rates to Identify Children with High Needs. The proposal identifies that work has been done in a number of areas and approaches with regards to assessment. They include the revision of the EPSDT schedule including developmental screening. Screening for infants and toddlers is not explicitly identified, as it is for preschool children screening where is available through the Child Outreach screening program. The Office of Special Education Programs in 2005, began requiring early childhood special-education programs to report on child outcomes. Pre-Kindergarten Program classrooms are required to implement a curriculum aligned with the RIELS and to use the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system to measure child outcomes. Learning environments are measured with Environmental Rating Scales; the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System; the Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Mathematics and Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition. The populations of children identified in Table A1-2 have not been commented on this is section of the proposal with regards to how they will be appropriately assessed. C2b The proposal has identified in the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Framework which was developed for Rhode Island Teacher and Teacher Assistants a domain focused on child assessment, "Observation and Assessment." Included are subcategories, for example, knowledge acquisition, conducting developmental and formal assessments, documentation and communication of information. There is currently no Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework for program administrators and educational leaders, but there are plans to develop one. Implementing a strong assessment system requires that all levels of personnel involved in the assessing be trained and competent, that is from direct service providers to supervisors. This is a concern with regards to continuous quality monitoring and improvement. Additionally, professional-development opportunities will be developed and made available at no cost during the grant period. While the framework will exist during the grant, there are no indications about what will occur after the end of the grant period. C2c Alignment and integrating systems has not yet been done. R.I. Department of Health public-health database, KIDSNET, is being modified to track developmental screening data from both primary-care providers and Child Outreach screening programs. With regards to assessments and services the proposal identifies that they currently lack capacity to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate Child Outreach screening to young English learners statewide but this will be a priority for training on practice and procedures. However the other Children with High Needs population identified in this grant are not commented on. C2d To address the need for training ECE to administer assessments, the State will identify and expand a pool of assessors who will trained to achieve reliability on the standardized classroom quality assessments used by the State. Policies and procedures to address the sharing, transfer, and use of classroom-quality data within the State's Tiered Quality rating and Improvement System will be developed to reduce duplication of assessment between the multiple entities monitoring classroom quality. It is not clear how the assessment data will be used to inform and improve instruction, programs and services. The timeline includes language 'using assessment data to improve instruction at the program and classroom levels' but does not indicate implementing change or evaluating it. The proposal identified a timeline and key activities that address many of the components. The scoring rubric used is high quality 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
The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--		
(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;		
(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and		
(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

D1a The proposal indicates that Rhode Island has developed a comprehensive set of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Teachers and Teacher Assistants, but competencies for other Early Childhood Educators have not been completed. The development of competencies for family day care providers and early childhood special educators will begin in January 2012. The development work for competencies for program administrators and educational coordinators will begin in June 2012 ending a year later. The frameworks for these competencies are based on 3 core structures, the Career Lattice, Bloom's Taxonomy, and Six Domains important to the profession. Rhode Island anticipates completing a final comprehensive set of Core Competencies for everyone by June 2012. The material presented in this proposal shows that RI is in the planning phase of many of the frameworks, and is working on addressing the different Early Learning and Development programs and staffing structures. In the competency framework activities the timing for program administrators and educational coordinators is not coordinated with the higher educator alignment work to create an integrated approach. D1b To Align Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework representatives from higher education teacher-preparation programs will be reviewing their existing curricula assisted by a team of independent consultants who will crosswalk the curricula with the competency frameworks with a completion date of Dec 2012. A planning conference will take place in January 2013, resulting in a conference scheduled for January 2014. Each program will showcase its revised curriculum content and associated alignment of resulting credentials and degrees. D1c Specific plans are detailed regarding opportunities for knowledge development about the competencies and will be introduced to a process for aligning current and future professional development opportunities with the applicable core competencies. This will work will include understanding of effective professional development pedagogy for the diverse population of adult learners in Rhode Island. The process for engagement and alignment with the post-secondary institutions is not clearly identified and can impact other competency frameworks, for example National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education. The proposal has identified specific populations of children with High Need, yet there no information on how content on workforce knowledge on these populations will be included. The applicant has presented a developed sound plan for developing a Workforce knowledge and competency framework. The scoring for this section uses the high quality partially implemented rubric.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

D2a The proposal indicates that it has developed a plan which includes all of the essential elements of a Professional Development System. It is composed of Professional Standards, career pathways, articulation, advisory structure, data and financing. Using this structure the following programs have been identified as the 'Building Blocks for an Effective PD System in Rhode Island' to provide training and PD opportunities. They are: the following Rhode Island Early Learning Resource and Referral Center, Ready to Learn Providence, The Educational Development Center, public colleges, the community college, and The Educational Development Center. This composition of programs appears to provide the needed foundation to support early childhood educators PD. D2b The articulated career pathways for the workforce will be aligned with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks but is still in development. The proposal indicates that initial steps have been taken to improve access. They include the Project TEACH model, which provides scholarships and support. No data was provided on this model implementation which began in 2010 in RI. The compensation information did not include the numbers of professionals who would qualify and for how long, nor did it identify other financial incentives. There is no indication how the State plans to support Family day care providers to improve their

professional development so that they can continue to work while still providing childcare during their work hours. Additionally a bar chart in the D2b section was provided in the application on compensation issues, but there was no key so it did not provide needed information on this issue. D2c RI has little data on the early learning workforce and are not able to report aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention. The applicant acknowledges that this is a gap in the system capacity. D2d1 The goals that have been set are: Goal 1: Increase the availability and accessibility of high-quality professional-development opportunities that are aligned with Rhode Island's new Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks; Goal 2: Provide a continuum of supports that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway and that is designed to increase retention; and Goal 3: Collect and publicly report aggregated data on early childhood educator development, advancement, and retention (Workforce Study and Workforce Registry). Within the first year of implementation of the Reform Plan, Rhode Island will design and implement a structured Professional Development Approval Process for community-based professional development in order to identify those offerings that are aligned with Rhode Island's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks. PD areas identified include all the previously identified credentialing areas in addition PD to support cultural and linguistic competencies. PD for mono-lingual Spanish-speaking educators have been identified to address the Children with High Needs areas. However, special needs, children who are homeless, children in foster care and children who have been abused and children who are migrant have not been identified. The plan includes designing and implementing a system to identify and support skilled professional-development providers through a Trainer Registry. Appropriate timeline, key activities and milestones have been identified. They designate The Resource Center to serve as the clearinghouse for high-quality, align PD resources; and expand upon its current peer-support networks to include cross-sector support for educators at all levels, expanding a cohort model that utilizes peer networks, coaching, and mentoring combined with academic coursework. D2d2 Table (D)(2)(d)(1). Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework has provided target goals for years 2012-2015 for institutions. It is difficult to evaluate the appropriateness of these numbers since the baseline data is 'unknown'. The timeline, key activities and milestones developed to address this component appear to be workable. Scoring uses the high quality partially implemented rubric.

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)

Rhode Island does not currently use a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment as defined by this grant. The applicant is committed to the development and implementation over the four year grant period. E1a The proposal's first goal is Develop and implement a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment aligned with state standards across all domains of child development. A core team composed of a broad range of participants will review a wide range of materials. The purpose of these initial reviews will be to: 1) identify best practices in kindergarten assessment; 2) identify promising practices in other States; 3) identify promising practices in Rhode Island; and 4) develop a detailed crosswalk and analysis of current assessments, resources, and recommended practices related to kindergarten assessment to determine areas of commonality and existing gaps. The selection criteria will include addressing all Essential Domains of School Readiness, validity and reliability for the intended purposes and target populations in the State, which will include English Learners and children with disabilities; and the alignment with Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards for pre-kindergarten children and with the learning expectations for kindergarten children, these criteria respond to a and b. Input from stakeholders will be obtained using forums, surveys, and focus groups. The team will also develop an implementation plan that will describe the funding and implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, beginning in the school year 2014-15. There is no indication in this plan how the stakeholders who are homeless will be included, or how representatives from the foster care system will be identified or children who are abuse, migrants or from Indian Lands will be represented. E1b A key activity in the plan is to develop or identify a valid, reliable, and appropriate Kindergarten Entry Assessment and develop a plan that includes administration policies and procedures to ensure valid and reliable assessment results. Information on ongoing quality assurance, for example periodic inter-rater reliability has not been provided. How the assessment will include validity and reliability with regards to the populations of Children with High Needs is not identified. E1c The plan proposes a phased implementation. The pilot of the assessment will be conducted during the 2014-15 school year, with revisions and modifications completed by July 2015. The pilot cohort of school districts will be selected from the core communities with the largest percentages of Children with High Needs as well as from at least one district from the remainder of the State, in order to build support for statewide scale-up. In the 2015-16 school year a second tier of districts serving the next-highest concentrations of Children with High Needs will be phased in, along with any other districts that wish to voluntarily participate. Finally, in 2016-17, the remaining districts will begin implementing the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. That this will occur after the completion of the grant and raises the question regarding is the plan achievable. E1d The kindergarten-assessment data will be incorporated into the R.I. Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data System and into the Rhode Island Instructional Management System (IMS), and it will be linked to the Early Learning Data System. The IMS is being built with existing Rhode Island RTTT funding, will be available to educators in the LEAs beginning the 2012-13 school year. The proposal identifies in E2 that its early learning data system will comply with federal, state and local privacy laws. E1e The budget for this grant is limited to the costs to develop/identify a kindergarten entry assessment and to develop supports to ensure valid and reliable implementation. The education funding formula passed by the RI General Assembly in 2009 and described previously was crafted in part to ensure LEAs a predictable, equitable funding stream that covers the costs of implementing the requirements of the Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations. As described in section C (2), the BEP requires that each LEA implement a Comprehensive Assessment System, including assessments conducted for the purpose of guiding instruction. As a result, ongoing funding for a kindergarten entry assessment is included in the education funding formula and has not been included in the budget for this grant, which is a concern. Scoring uses the partially implemented high quality rubric.

	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)		

E2a The proposal indicates that with this grant, The Rhode Island Early Learning Data System will include all of the Essential Data Elements. E2b The applicant indicates that Rhode Island's, key data for young children, early learning programs, and the early childhood workforce is in 6 different databases managed by 4 different State departments and 1 nonprofit organization. The proposal indicates that each early childhood data system is free-standing, and linking data is a challenge. This is a key need that has been identified and addressed in the States goals. They are Goal 1: Create a governance structure and data-oversight process that ensures shared planning, access, and use of the Early Learning Data System across State departments, by early learning intermediary organizations, and by early learning programs; Goal 2: Expand the R.I. Department of Education's State Longitudinal Data System (the RIDE Data Warehouse) and build a strong link to the R.I. Department of Health's KIDSNET database to track information on; 1) young children's participation & attendance in early learning programs; 2) young children's learning and development; 3) early learning programs and classrooms; and; 4) the early learning workforce; Goal 3: Expand the R.I. Department of Health's KIDSNET database to track information on children's developmental screening and follow-up action; and Goal 4: Build infrastructure to track data on young children's development and learning from birth to kindergarten entry, including development and implementation of a statewide common formative child-assessment system during the early childhood years and at entry to kindergarten. This is an inclusive approach to addressing this system need. The State is currently implementing two major federal grant efforts: the State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant and a Race to the Top (K-12) grant. Both of these projects are improving the R.I. Department of Education's (RIDE) data infrastructure which will support this effort. E2c The data system will be built to ensure shared access and use of the Rhode Island Early Learning Data System across the State agencies and funding streams. A plan for data integration and streamlined data entry will be developed. In the design phase, Rhode Island standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions will be developed to be used across State agencies and programs. This will include work to develop Common Education Data Standards and the National Workforce Registry Alliance to develop and promulgate common data elements for early childhood and school-age workforce registries. E2d Rhode Island will identify and develop data-system reporting mechanisms for compliance reporting, continuous quality improvement, and key policy questions. It will be important to develop reports at the State level and by funding stream (e.g., Child Care Assistance Program, Head Start, Early Intervention). E2e The planning/governing body will work with RIDE to develop and share data privacy and security policies and practices to comply with federal, state, and local privacy laws. Rhode Island is committed to addressing data-system oversight, including data-system governance and transparency as found in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Guidance. This is a strength and important for implementation. Timeline, key activities and milestones appear appropriate for the work that has been identified. It is not clear how information on the specifically identified special populations of children in this grant, identified in Table A1-2, will be entered into the developing system. There does not appear to be mention of the foster care system or how the homeless are tracked. No mention of migrant or those residing in Indian lands has been made. Scoring uses the partially implemented high quality rubric.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	222

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

P2a Rhode Island has decided that its first priority is to strengthen licensing practices and policies for the programs that are already regulated. Therefore, at this time, Rhode Island does not plan to expand family child-care regulations to include providers caring for 2 or 3 unrelated children until they have completed several reform strategies outlined below. The goals include: Update center and family child-care regulations; Upgrade licensing inspection, monitoring, and enforcement processes; Increase the frequency of routine inspections of family child-care homes to at least once per year; Integrate data collection for licensing with the new Rhode Island Early Learning Data System and Establish a system to share compliance information with families and the public through the Internet. The concern is that family child-care providers often care for high needs children thus the key focus of this grant is not being addressed. P2b Rhode Island will require all State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs, including all licensed child-care and early learning programs (child-care centers, preschools, nursery schools, family child-care homes, and center based Early Head Start and Head Start) and all center-based early learning programs operated by the public schools (IDEA Preschool and Title I classrooms and any other State- or locally funded preschool classrooms) to require all licensed programs to enter the TQRIS as part of the licensing process. RIDE Approval Standards, licensing standards, and BrightStars Program Standards will also be aligned so that there can be efficiencies in terms of staffing and clarity on what the ratings mean in terms of program quality across different approval and assessment processes. A concern is that this grant has an emphasis on Children with High Needs and the State has identified specific populations of children, but there is a paucity of focus on them. The scoring is uses the partially implemented high quality rubric.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The State has not yet implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State has earned at least 70 percent of the maximum points in (E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The proposal has identified the work that has been previously done in the State to address Early Learning and Development for infants, toddlers and preschool children. Work to be done including Inter-agency collaboration, designing and increasing the work done on statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, what they will be doing to promote early learning and development outcomes, how they will build a great early childhood education workforce and how they will measure outcomes and progress for infants, toddlers and preschool children has been addressed. The State has addressed the criteria of the Focused Investment Areas for (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress in order to prepare Children for kindergarten success.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # RI-5033

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: **11/17/2011 - 6:57 AM**

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(1)

In many ways, the state demonstrates a strong commitment to Early Learning and Development even though financial commitment has not increased steadily and the numbers of Children With High Needs has declined. Although less during the economic downturn, the state has demonstrated financial commitment to quality and access to Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. For example, the state has provided funding to supplement Head Start funding; to eliminate any waiting list for the child care subsidy; meet or exceeded CCDF match; and to fully fund pre-K over the next 10 years beginning with the neediest communities first. State, local and federal funds also are efficiently leveraged to provide developmental screening, health insurance, health promotion consultation, and funding for Early Childhood Educator professional development. Many of the financial commitments are the result of collaborations among state government and private sector leaders and as a result of legislative mandate. Children with High Needs served has declined in every category of program except IDEA, which has had a small increase since 2005 and state-funded pre-K which began a small pilot program in 2010. The eligibility for the child care subsidy also has been reduced from 225% of poverty rate to 180% of the poverty rate. The application notes that part of the decreases are due to declining revenues, but also to high rates of unemployment coupled with the requirement that service in many programs is tied to employment. The state has made changes in policies that allow children of unemployed parents to stay in programs longer. To partially compensate for the more stringent eligibility requirement, the state has increase the amount of time a child can remain in a program after a parent loses a job and has extended the length of eligibility. Many policies supportive of a quality system of Early Education are tied to legislative changes. For example, legislative action has resulted in higher licensing standards, mandates for health insurance subsidies for the Early Education workforce, early learning standards for children ages 3-5, state-wide pre-K to be publicly financed and phased in over a 10 year period. The state has in place a leadership council that consists of appropriate state agency heads and key leaders from the private sector. The leadership council focuses work on most key areas identified in the RTT-ELC competition and was key to the development of the proposal. Some key building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system are fully in place. Others are partially in place or in the planning or pilot stage. For example, Early Learning and Development Standards that address all Essential Domains of

School Readiness are developed and in place for children ages 3-5, but not for infants and toddlers. Professional development is available based on the standards. Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment are in place, although the system is not fully actualized. The State has a TQRIS (voluntary) that requires all elements of comprehensive assessment and uses valid and reliable tools to measure both the environmental quality of programs and the adult-child interactions. Cognitive (science) and needs of English learners receive individual attention with separate valid and reliable instruments. Most preschool children receive screening assessments. A valid, reliable, and appropriate tool is used for formative child assessment, but only by state-funded pre-K and IDEA programs. Health promotion practices are strong in many categories of programs. The biggest gap is in the inclusion of health literacy. Another gap is that licensing and CCDF programs require only health and safety requirements. Ninety two percent of children in the state under 18 years of age are covered with health insurance that includes dental services. This coverage is partially due to state funding. Consultation on general health and mental health is available to child care providers and educators. Strong family engagement also is present in many categories of programs. Again, the gap is in licensed and CCDF programs. For example, these categories address family engagement only in the most rudimentary ways such as open access for parents and having a family policy document. Early Childhood Educator Development is being addressed by the development of a Workforce Competency Framework and career lattice that will be implemented by the end of this year. The framework addresses teachers, and the state had identified the need to expand the framework for family child-care providers, program administrators and education coordinators. Two-year and four year institutions offer college credit which can be applied to the CDA credential and a early education credential, as well as a four year degree. Institutions and providers have not yet aligned their programs to the Workforce Competency Framework, because it will not be implemented until the end of the year. The state has mandated Kindergarten Entry Assessment by legislation and all children entering kindergarten receive some type of assessment determined by their school district. Since 2010, a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment has been a goal of the state's early childhood data systems planning effort. Planning teams have been at work; recommendations have been presented to and accepted by the Early Learning Council. A common Kindergarten Entry Assessment is identified as one of the RTT-ELC project activities. Data related to early learning parameters currently are collected in six different databases. Each database addresses some, but not all of the essential data elements. For example, the database that serves IDEA and state-funded pre-K programs addresses all the essential elements except data on program structure and quality. However, the database for licensing collects only a program site identifier and data on program structure and quality. A draft plan has been approved to build on the existing infrastructure and develop an early learning data system that will address all essential elements and be coordinated with the P-20 data system.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The application provides a clear set of goals for comprehensive reform of the state's early learning and development initiative. The goals are complementary to the needs identified in (A)(1). For example, goals for "High Quality Accountable Programs" include change the existing voluntary TQRIS participation to required participation tied to licensing and required by all programs that receive public funding including Title I and special education preschool classrooms. Also included is the goal of aligning the Program Standards, TQRIS and licensing requirements and validation of the TQRIS system. Goals related to promoting access to High Quality Early Learning and Development Programs by Children with Special Needs focus on improving the quality of existing programs through use of the TQRIS accompanied by technical assistance, program improvement contracts, financial incentives of achieving higher levels. These improvements will be prioritized for programs and providers who serve Children with High Needs. Proposed activities to support Early Learning and Development outcomes build on elements currently partially in place. For example, the Early Learning Program Standards will be expanding to include birth-age 3, and the reach of the formative child assessment system will be expanded. Several existing early learning databases will be combined to achieve a more efficient, usable, and complete early learning data system. An existing requirement for a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be coordinated into the provision of a common assessment tool. The state's plan for reform is ambitious and far-reaching. The plan inspires confidence that it can be achieved because most of the proposed project activities build on a strong existing foundation. The application had identified what is missing in the state's current agenda and has built a strong plan around providing the missing elements. All project elements form a web of coordinated support focused on the readiness gap of Children with High Needs. The application provides good explanations for why the Focused Investment areas were selected. For example, (C) (1) was selected because the current Early Learning and Development Standards which addressing all Essential Domains of School Readiness do not

address ages birth-3. (C) (2) was selected to build upon and expand formative child assessment currently in place for some early learning programs; a system of developmental screening that needs to be more available to Children with High Needs; and expanding classroom quality evaluations as a requirement rather than voluntary. Areas (D) (1) and (D) (2) were selected to continue the prior work of developing a Knowledge and Competency Framework and a comprehensive professional development system. (E) (1) was selected so the existing requirement for kindergarten entry assessment can be coordinated into a statewide common assessment. (E) (2) was selected to allow the state to maximize use of existing data collected in many different databases and to include collection of the data that is missing and will create a comprehensive system. The proposed project activities combined with existing strength will result in a much stronger, integrated and comprehensive system of early learning and development that is targeted toward improved readiness outcomes for Children with High Needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

A reasonable and appropriate governance structure that provides for efficient project management and fiscal control is proposed. Additionally the governance plan also promotes cross agency cooperation and collaboration. The proposed Lead Agency for the RTT-ELC is the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The other Participating State Agencies have signed memoranda of understanding with appropriate scope of work attachments. These memoranda include assurance that each Participating State Agency will agree to implement key project aspects such as the Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System, state-wide Early Learning and Development Standards, statewide Program Standards and a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials. The Lead Agency will have fiscal responsibility and also will be responsible for making certain the scope of work for each Participating Agency is completed efficiently and on time. Also proposed is an advisory group. This group (Rhode Island Early Learning Council) was established by legislative mandate, includes high level leaders including the heads of the Participating Agencies, as well as representatives of Early Childhood Intermediaries, pediatricians, parents, and representative from each category of Early Learning and Development program. The council historically has been ambitious and effective at promoting an effective early learning agenda, as well collaboration across constituencies. The current head of the Lead Agency also is president of the Council. This arrangement helps insure good communication and will make decision-making a smoother process. Many of the initiatives proposed in the application grew from cross agency work and recommendations of the Council. A strong past history of collaboration reduces the possibility of any major disagreements, however, an effective plan to resolve disputes is proposed. Agencies are responsible for making decisions.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The application clearly explains how existing funding will be used to support project activities. The requested funds about to about 66% of the total funding that will be used to support project activities. The remaining 44% will come from state funds, existing funds, or other sources. The existing funds that are proposed to be used come from a wide variety of sources including CCDF quality set asides, Medicaid, Statewide Longitudinal Data system funds, as well as others. Details in the tables and narratives clearly describe how the funds will be used to support each project and how the funds will be used by each Participating State Agency's effort for each reform project. The proposed amounts are reasonable for the types of projects proposed and for the numbers of children to be served. Strengths in the budget narratives are the explanation of how budget amounts were developed through consultation with the Participating State Agencies, input from stakeholders, and prior experience with similar types of projects. Funds are requested primarily for projects that put systems into place that will have a direct impact on the quality of early learning programs for Children with High Needs. For example, a stronger and more efficient data system will be built; Early Learning Standards will be aligned to Workforce Competency Frameworks and the career lattice; the Kindergarten Entry Assessment established by legislative mandate will become a single common statewide assessment; Early Learning and Development Standards will be developed from infants and toddlers and professional development modules will be developed for Early Childhood teachers of these age groups. Most of the funds will be controlled by the Participating State Agencies; however, in a state this small with only about 1 million total population, this plan is very reasonable. Sustainability is addressed in the application, but a strong plan is not always provided. For example, the incentive system is noted in the application as being a key to participation and movement up the TQRIS levels. Although, the application promises that the state advisory group will seek funding for sustainability, it does not mention any possible sources. Other aspects of sustainability are addressed through better use of existing resources rather than through the development of new resources. For example, the state anticipates that eliminating duplication and streamlining will free resources to provide

sustainability for professional development efforts. Cost reductions due to lower prices associated with larger volume purchases is anticipated to make it more affordable for the state to include all providers in the formative child assessment system. Details are lacking about these plans. For example, the cost of large vs. small quantities of a typical assessment tool. One strong aspect in the sustainability plan is that existing or previously planned resources will cover the continuation of the wider reaching screening assessment and the expansion of state-funded pre-K.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

While the state does have a tiered system of program standards that addresses all elements except effective data processes, this TQRIS system is voluntary. Both centers and family child-care homes may participate. The system has been evaluated by a reputable outside source that confirmed the system's ability to differentiate quality. The outside evaluation of the TQRIS also documented strong connections between the TQRIS and both NAEYC Accreditation standards and Head Start. NAEYC accredited centers and Head Start centers, which have strong high quality standards both clustered near the top of the TQRIS rating system. However, all elements of a strong TQRIS are not yet in place. For example, the system is not presently developed for infants and toddlers. Additionally, several different sets of program standards are in place. In addition to the quality standards in TQRIS, the state has a separate set of comprehensive program quality standards that addresses all RTT-ELC elements. This second set of program standards is required of all programs that operate within the public schools and is voluntary for other programs. Head Start works with a third set of program standards. Many positive health related programs and practices are in place; however, the narrative indicated the TQRIS addressed health promotion practices and evidence to support that assurance was not available

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The state has achieved some success encouraging early learning programs to participate in the existing TQRIS. Ten percent of the programs in the state are currently participating. State incentives are in place for participation. Quality improvement grants are available for participating programs to purchase materials for needed improvements. The state contracts with a large professional organization to administer the TQRIS, and each participant receives an individualized quality improvement plan developed by the professional organization. TQRIS participants are recognized in the capitol city newspaper and an annual awards banquet that includes high level stakeholders and philanthropists. State funded pre-K programs will be required to participate as that effort begins to be implemented this year. The United Way requires participation by programs that received funding. The state prioritizes TQRIS participants in the award of T.E.A.C.H. scholarship and other professional development opportunities. The application includes the proposal that the state will require all early learning programs to participate in the revised TQRIS. This plan includes the acknowledgment that many supports will be needed to help programs move up in the quality levels. The plan will prioritize help toward the programs that serve Children with High Needs in communities with the highest concentration of these children. The state plans to implement the requirement as new programs are licensed and as currently licensed have their license renewed in 2013 (when the new TQRIS will be available). The state does provide an ambitious plan for bringing all Early Learning and Development Programs in the state into the TQRIS system; however, the plan proposed may be very difficult to achieve. The plan proposes a gradual "phase in" from categories of programs with small numbers such as state-funded pre-K and Head Start. Program categories with very large numbers are all planned to come on board during a single year (2013). During 2013 almost 2,000 new programs are scheduled to enter the system. The application acknowledges that the system is likely to be overwhelmed, but does not provide any suggestions for mitigating this effect.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The existing TQRIS uses appropriate tools and addresses inter-rater reliability of monitors through a well-developed training protocol. Classroom environment measures with established validity and reliability are employed and a standardized method is used to collect other supporting documentation for establishment of tier ratings. A valid and reliable measure of adult/child interaction is being piloted for use. The state trains two levels of monitors for the classroom environment tool. The "anchor level" monitors must reach a very high level of inter-rater reliability and receive extensive training from the group that developed the instrument. "Anchors" then train other monitors in the state and check each monitor's reliability regularly, although the frequency of these reliability checks is not specified. Visits to do the classroom observations are unannounced for both center-based and home-based programs. The biggest weakness in the current system is the frequency of monitoring for licensing. Currently, the assigned TQRIS rating is good for a 3-year period, although more frequent assessment is available, if a program wants to try for a higher rating. Annual reports also are required and include an update licensing status, documentation of any program changes, and an update on progress made on the programs individual quality improvement plan. While center-based programs receive two monitoring visits each year, home-based programs only are visited every two years. Therefore, currently it is possible for family child-care to receive only one licensing visit within the 3-year term of the quality rating. The plan proposed does address this issue. Rating information is widely available to parents and the public through many different outlets including two websites, required posting within the program, and interpretive information available in both English and Spanish.

The online sources provide detail about the quality ratings of the different program aspects. The public availability of licensing information is problematic, however. Parents only can receive the information by calling the licensing agency, and the current licensing data system does not maintain any history of compliance. The application recognizes the difficulty with monitoring frequency and with availability of information about licensing. Greater frequency of monitoring for licensing is proposed, as are improvements in the data system that will allow more comprehensive information to be collected and made available. Adding capacity to the TQRIS system to accommodate the large influx of programs that will be required to participate is mentioned, but without details about how this will be accomplished. A strong aspect of the proposal is the plan to train all TQRIS monitors to the higher "anchor" level of inter-rater reliability. The application sets forth a High Quality Plan to reform the currently fragmented system. Proposed reforms include: adding tiers for infant and toddler programs; improving licensing standards (baseline for participation in the TRIS) to better align with TQRIS particularly in the areas of health and safety; aligning the TQRIS to both the comprehensive standards used by public schools and to the Head Start standards so a single set of program standards will apply to all categories of early learning programs; aligning and including new Early Learning Standards, new developmental screening, new child assessment standards and effective data practices; adding a measure of adult/child interaction; improving the monitoring system. The application explains how licensing is required for participation in the TQRIS. Also explained are plans to ensure that movement up in the tiers is not possible if there are unresolved licensing violations. A time line is provided for the major aspects of this project, and responsibilities are assigned to the Participating Agencies.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	15
<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 improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(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);</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--</p> <p>(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)
<p>The state has an established system of supports and incentives for the participants in the existing TQRIS. For example, professional development is available through several different organizations including the TQRIS system. Professional development at the college level also is available through a state initiative and through the state T.E.A.C.H. administration. T.E.A.C.H. is associated with increased compensation. A facilities fund provides easy financing for capital improvements to increase quality, and the fund provides training and technical assistance, as well. The TQRIS does offer grants (\$1,000-\$4,500) for making needed improvements as an incentive for participating in TQRIS. The state does not have tiered reimbursement, and the professional development is focused on the preschool age group, although some professional development is available for the infant and toddler age group through and organization that provides health and mental health consultation. The application proposes significant improvements in the delivery of professional development including more support for family child care providers and for programs serving infants and toddlers, as well as targeted professional development for program administrators and expansion of availability of higher education. Also proposed is a tiered reimbursement system. The priority for additional services will be for programs that serve Children with High Needs. Expansion of the incentive grants also is provided, tying them more closely to the TQRIS levels and providing improvement "contracts" as part of the grant. This state already provides some support for helping working families. For example, Head Start services in the state are full day, and the state-funded pre-K is required to offer or to link to full day service, if families need it. These programs often make use of the child care subsidy. No mention is made about provision of services beyond the 9-month school year, transportation, meals, or other types of family supports. The application proposes an ambitious plan for involving early learning programs in the TQRIS, including all categories of programs except IDEA Part C, which is delivered within the children's homes. The application notes the state has received a different competitive grant (MIECHV) that is addressing better monitoring for home visiting programs. By Year 3 of the project, all early learning programs will be required to participate in the TQRIS, including all state-funded pre-K classrooms, all licensed centers and all licensed homes. The plan for programs serving Children with High Needs achieving high levels of the TQRIS is much more modest. For example, currently almost 8,000 children are served by licensed programs receiving some support from CCDF. However, only 30% of these programs are projected to be in the higher tiers by the end of 2015. The application notes the importance of family child care services in the state because they serve many immigrant families that do not speak English. However, only 30% of those programs are projected to achieve the higher tiers by the end of 2015.</p>

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

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

- (a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and
- (b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

This state already has done a pilot validation study of its TQRIS using an outside evaluator. The original TQRIS system was not found to differentiate well among the levels. The well-respected evaluator made several suggestions for improving the criteria, and the suggestions were implemented. A follow-up study revealed much better differentiation and was cross-checked with another quality evaluation system (NAEYC accreditation). The accredited centers clustered near the top of the tiers. This work was done only with center-based programs. Family child care was not included. Results of the study did not include child assessment data. The application proposes to implement an evaluation plan that addresses the the factors in this criterion. A new study will tie the quality level of the program to the achievement of children. An additional validation study of the revised TQRIS is proposed, as well. Outside evaluators are proposed for each study. Respected measures with established validity and reliability are proposed for the child measures. The structure of the study will use a sampling technique. The major remaining difficulty is these studies are proposed to include only center-based programs serving preschool aged children. The importance of family child care for serving Children with High Needs has been mentioned in the application several times, yet it may not be studied until after the term of the grant. The application does note that private foundation funds will be sought to add family child care providers. No mention is made of centers that serve infants and toddlers.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	24

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)

Good progress has been made by the state in developing a unified set of early learning standards. The application includes a copy of the state's Early Learning and Development Standards, which address all Essential Domains of School Readiness and are appropriate developmentally, linguistically, and culturally. The existing standards were aligned with the state's kindergarten standards when they were developed. The state is in the process of shifting to Common Core Standards for K-3, and the Early Learning and Development Standards will need to be aligned. Additionally, current Early Learning and Development Standards do not address infant and toddler ages. The existing Early Learning and Development Standards were developed within a framework of collaboration among many different types of stakeholders and they were field tested before being implemented. The field test informed changes in the standards, themselves, as well as changes in the system of professional development support provided. The state also has in place a strong system of support for Early Childhood Educators to learn about the standards and how to use them. Workshops on the Early Learning and Development Standards are held regularly in all parts of the state. The system of professional development includes four levels, offers the option of earning college credit, includes mentoring and individualized technical assistance, provides opportunities for parents to learn about the standards and simple activities parents can do at home to address the standards, and is delivered by well-trained professionals. The application notes the system will need to be expanded to provide support for those working with infants and toddlers, but does not relate any specific plans. Early Learning and Development Standards need to be developed for infants and toddlers and formal alignments among the Early Learning and Development Standards, the state's program standards, and the Comprehensive Assessment System (which is under development) need to be developed. The Early Learning and Development Standards (pre-K) have been aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Activities to complete the alignment process are proposed as part of the work to be accomplished with the RTT-ELC project. Detailed plans are provided for aligning curriculum, assessments selected for the Comprehensive Assessment System, future professional development and family engagement activities, and development of Early Learning and Development Standards for infants and toddlers. The plans specify the responsible Participating State Agencies and the time frame for accomplishing each task.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System are in place. Valid and reliable instruments are used to assess the environment of programs that participate in the TQRIS. A valid and reliable measure of adult child interaction is used for programs that participate in the state's Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program. Classrooms that participate in the pilot of the pre-K program use established instruments to quality of instruction in science and math and the classroom support for language and literacy, particularly for dual language learners. The state makes high quality developmental screening universally available, and there is a system in place to train caregivers to continue developmental screening. Children who receive special education services receive formative assessment with a valid and reliable instrument. Children entering kindergarten receive an assessment. All these elements, however are not coordinated. All parts of the Comprehensive Assessment System are not available to all programs and all children. Common instruments are not uniformly used. Although universally available, only about 70% of children receive the developmental screening. A plan is proposed to address some of the gaps in the system. For example targeted professional development to help Early Educators learn to use assessment to guide instruction is proposed. Improvements to the system for developmental screening are proposed. The formative child assessment will be required of all Title I pre-K classrooms and all children served

by early intervention programs. The proposal notes that many Head Start classrooms already use the proposed child formative assessment measure. The proposal states that the formative child assessment will be required of all programs receiving state and federal funds; however, private providers who receive CCDF funds are not included in the list of programs to be required to use formative child assessment. These providers only will be encouraged to use the system. This category of care serves the majority of Children with High Needs in the state. Additionally, there is no discussion of formative assessment of infants and toddlers. A detailed action plan complete with time lines and assigned responsibilities is provided.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	17

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The application presents a strong plan for developing a common Workforce Competency Framework. Work on this common framework that addresses teachers, teacher assistants, education coordinators and administrators is ready to be released and implemented. The state's Early Learning and Development Standards are addressed in the curriculum section of the framework. The career lattice has four levels and is based on a common set of competencies important for children's early learning and development. The lower levels of the lattice expect knowledge and understanding, while the upper levels of the lattice expect higher order thinking such as analysis, synthesis and reflection on practice. The application indicates that family child care is addressed in the current framework, yet development of core competencies for family child care also is included in the goals for the proposed project, thus it is unclear if the family child care role is addressed in the current framework. It also is not clear if the current framework addresses the unique knowledge and competencies needed by those Early Childhood Educators who work with infants and toddlers. The discussion of the career lattice does not clarify exactly how the lattice works or will work. For example, the application explains that the framework is tied to a career lattice with four levels based on a combination of formal study, experience, and professional development. It also indicates that the four levels are aligned with one another, but does not explain exactly how. For example how college work done at one level (community college) get applied to a higher level (bachelor's degree) is not described. Also, the application does not explain how the current national credential (CDA) is linked to the progression. The application does not explain if Level 4 involves a degree. The plan includes extending and aligning the Framework to include all areas of the Early Childhood workforce. For example, the application proposes to include teacher accreditation programs, competencies for early childhood special educators, competencies for professional development providers and higher education faculty. Once the Framework is completed, the application proposes that representatives of higher (teacher) education programs will be assisted in aligning their curricula to the Framework. This process is not clearly described and possible challenges are not addressed. Challenges include addressing existing sets of standards from national accrediting agencies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) that are required of teacher education programs. Alignment of professional development opportunities that address the new aspects of the framework also is proposed. For example, professional development providers that receive state funding will be encouraged to use a standard format to explain the relationship between the service provided and the core competencies. No explanation is provided about how the provision of professional development will be tied to the lattice. For example, the content of the lattice levels is not provided nor the types or topics of professional development session or course work are described. The work plan is detailed and includes time lines and assignment of responsibilities to the appropriate Participating State Agencies.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

Although many good professional development opportunities exist in the state, they are not coordinated. A thorough and well-developed plan is presented for expanding professional development opportunities and aligning those opportunities to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. For example, the plan emphasizes building the capacity of trainers and professional development providers; developing new professional development opportunities that reflect research by paying particular attention to content, sequence, intensity and duration of the opportunities; insuring professional development opportunities include follow up and technical assistance; developing flexible delivery systems for professional development (cohorts, peer networks, online, etc.); and developing a system of approved professional development sessions and sequences that will be required by licensing and incorporated into the TQRIS. Also proposed is alignment of college program objectives to the Work Force Competencies through the system for teacher education program approval within the state Department of Education. Additionally, the proposal includes plans to reach family, friends, and neighbor care by requiring those providers who receive CCDF funds to participate in pre-service professional development related to health and safety. The state does currently address incentives to the early childhood work force through the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships that are tied to increased compensation. The application proposed to expand the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and to double the capacity of an existing community college program that results in 18 credit hours of college work. Additionally, the state already has a task force in place charged with identifying incentives and supports. Other innovative incentive ideas are proposed as possibilities including: tax credit, loan forgiveness, and requiring a portion of quality improvement grants in the TQRIS program to be used for compensation. The plan for incentives and financial support will be developed on the basis of the report from the task force now at work. Thus, none of the ideas proposed are firmly part of the reform plan. Access to career development for Early Childhood Educators also will be promoted with structural changes such as the development of a centralized listing of professional development opportunities, provision of career advising. The state also proposes development of articulation agreements with two and four year colleges that will allow alternative paths to teacher certification that include credit for work experience and credit for work completed in high school career technical programs. No discussion has been provided that addresses a plan for overcoming the, often, significant obstacles incumbent with these alternative credits and articulation agreements. The state does currently does not have a workforce registry for Early Childhood Educators and has not readily accessible data regarding the education and experience qualifications of the current workforce. The application clearly indicates the state understands why such information is important for workforce development and policy planning. As part of the application, a comprehensive Early Learning Data System is proposed, and educator demographics, including a unique identifier, will be included in that system. The application discusses ways the information will be used by policy makers and early learning professionals; however, it does not clarify how the information will be made available to the public, including parents. The application does provide a plan for increasing the numbers of educators receiving a credential from an institution with a program aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. A plan also is presented for numbers of Early Childhood Educators who will achieve the various levels of credentials during 2014 and 2015. Whether these plans are ambitious or achievable is difficult to judge because there is no baseline. Although the application explains that alignment of programs to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework will be part of the RTT-ELC project, some estimation of a baseline is needed. Likewise, although there is no current registry of educator credentials, and a labor survey is proposed for the first year of the project, no baseline estimate is available.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		

Comments on (E)(1)

Although the state does not presently implement a common kindergarten entry assessment, it does have in place a good foundation. For example, state law requires each district to conduct screening at kindergarten entry that assesses readiness in key areas; however, districts are at liberty to select the instrument, and the state does not collect the data. Additionally, the state already provides funding for kindergarten entry assessment through Basic Education Program funding formulae. The state has identified the need for a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment through established work groups and other grant applications. A careful, thorough, and detailed plan is presented to implement a common Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The steps are developed in such a way that buy-in by stakeholders will be developed and a legislative mandate for the common assessment will be in place. Also carefully considered in the plan is training to insure proper administration of the instrument to maintain validity and reliability, as well as training to use the results appropriately to inform instruction. A pilot assessment is proposed, allowing for adjustments to the system before full implementation. The implementation plan will prioritize use of the assessment by the districts that serve the largest populations of Children with High Needs. The phased implementation will begin in the 2014-2015 school year and will be completed in the 2016-2017 school year when districts serving the smallest numbers of Children With High Needs will implement. Data from the assessment will become part of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as well as other data systems that serve the early childhood community. The planning stages are proposed to be funded through the RTT-ELC, but implementation will be funded by individual districts through their state education funding formulae.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state does not currently have an integrated early education data system, but elements of such a system are in place. For example, each child born in the state since 1997 has been assigned a unique child identifier and has data regarding health screenings, immunizations, WIC participation, IDEA Part C participation, and other factors. Pediatricians, home visitors, Head Start agencies, and other similar groups use this system. Another foundational element is the fact that the state department of education has been implementing a state K-12 data warehouse as a result of a State Longitudinal Data Systems grant. This system is proposed to become the base of an expanded system to track early childhood data. Although not fully implemented this data warehouse has been built with advice and participation of key stakeholders that include agencies and organizations associated with early childhood. Additional work toward an integrated system has been done as part of a Ready Schools grant from the National Governors' Conference. A cohesive plan is presented to build upon the existing strengths to develop a complete and integrated data system. The plan that is proposed addresses inclusion of all Essential Data Elements, as well as features to make data entry and access relatively easy. For example, there currently are six different databases that collect information about young children and Early Learning Programs. The proposed data warehouse will provide links to the existing databases that will be maintained. This "dual" system will result in easier access for some professionals who do not need access to all information. For example, health care providers who currently use KIDSNET will continue to do so, but that information also will be more widely available in the comprehensive database. Appropriate levels of access are planned, depending on the group or agency. Common data structures such as those used by National Center for Education Statistics are proposed. The proposal includes building required participation in the data system into licensing and TQRIS, but no details are included about how this requirement will be implemented. The application addresses the need for the development of an appropriate governing infrastructure and policies consistent with Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	219

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Licensing in this state currently covers provider settings that serve 4 or more unrelated children, and the state does not plan to change this requirement during the course of the grant. This is problematic because the application explains that many families of Children with High Needs select family child-care because the provider often speaks the language spoken in the home. The application notes " Researchers have found that unregulated child care is often low quality." Yet the decision not to address unregulated family child care serving up to four children easily may result in many Children With High Needs not having access to programs of basic quality. The state argues that the first priority must be to strengthen the licensing system and insure compliance for the programs that currently are covered. Changes to licensing that are proposed include, stronger health and safety regulation, upgrading enforcement procedures, increasing monitoring to at least once per year for every covered program, integrating licensing data into the proposed data system, and making compliance information more readily available to the public through the internet. A positive in the plan is that the state proposes to include all programs covered by licensing, as well as all other Early Learning Programs such as those operated within the public schools including pre-K special education classrooms in the revised TQRIS system.

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>This state application does address comprehensively and coherently the development of state systems that will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children With High Needs. Throughout the proposal, the state plans to build upon existing strengths to enhance opportunities for Early Childhood Educators to improve their skills, for Early Learning and Development Programs to improve the quality of their programs, to collect and make available information critical for making policy decisions, as well as for making curriculum decisions at the child and classroom level. Coherent proposals are included to develop and/or link information so that progress in developing quality in the classroom can be linked to improvements in outcomes for Children With High Needs. Particularly apparent throughout the proposal is the priority given to programs and educators who serve the largest populations of Children With High Needs. Also apparent is the careful planning that has been done to identify action elements for each aspect of the plan and to assign responsibilities and appropriate time lines for task completion.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # RI-5033

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 7:18 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 17. Includes detailed text for (a) through (d) regarding financial investment, participation numbers, and legislative/policy practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

A.1. The state of Rhode Island has stabilized funding for Early Learning and Development Programs since 2007. In 1998 a comprehensive piece of legislation was passed called Starting Right that included licensing regulations, entitlement to child care and health insurance subsidies to low income families. Between 2000 and 2006 the state dramatically increased its subsidies in child care and was providing more state funded child care on a percentage basis than any other state. The state continues to invest a significant portion of TANF funds into the child care subsidy system. The state has also invested state funds to supplement the federal investment in Head Start. The most recent piece of legislation that supports funding to young children was passed by the General Assembly in 2010 and provides funding for a State Pre-K Program as a categorically funded program in a newly adopted Education Funding formula. Funding will begin in State FY2013 and will expand over ten year, to \$10 million per year, serving 1,100 children in 6 hour/day high quality programs. The number of children with high needs served in Early Learning and Development programs has decreased from 20,615 to 15,971 approximately 25 percent along with a decrease in funding from 70.6 million in 2007 to 42.1 million in 2011. These changes, in number of children being served and decreases in funding, reflect budget deficits, high unemployment rates and declining tax revenues. The funding reductions are primarily in child care subsidies through CCDF. Other legislative policies and practices include a Quality Rating and Improvement System passed in 2007 that establishes a voluntary quality rating system. This law led to Bright Starts, Rhode Island's Tiered QRIS which is the state's foundation to build upon to create an aligned system of early learning programs. The legislation that establishes funding for a pre-K program also established a TEACH Early Childhood Workforce-Development model. Rhode Island has established a collaborative governance structure where all the state agencies along with non profits have come together to create the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. Early Learning Standards for preschoolers were developed in 2003 and are aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes and Grade Level Expectations for Kindergarten. Standards for Infants and Toddlers need to be developed and will be the critical next step. Screening takes place through EPST schedules for infants and toddlers. Preschoolers developmental screening is universally available through school districts. Sixty three percent of preschoolers are being screened. The state is proposing to increase the screening to 80 percent through a Child Outreach Program. Approximately 3000 children

ages 3-5 are being assessed using Teaching Strategies GOLD. Other tools for assessment activities being used by the state include Environmental Rating Scales, The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS), the Preschool Instrument for Science and Mathematics (PRISM) and the Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition (CASEBA). Ninety three percent of children have health insurance. The state has other programs to address childhood obesity, and provides child care health and mental health consultants. The state provides training opportunities for parents to support family engagement and family engagement is a core component of quality in the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Approval Standards. The state is developing a four level career ladder for Early Childhood Teachers and Teacher Assistants. The TEACH program provides scholarships for ECE educators to get college degrees. The state does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment; however, it was identified as a key recommendation in the early childhood data-systems planning effort. A work team has made recommendations for a kindergarten entry assessment to the Early Learning Council and was approved in March 2011. The development of the assessment will be the next step in the Successful Start Comprehensive ECE Systems plan that was developed in 2005. The state has demonstrated a comprehensive and focused planning process beginning with the Successful Start and made significant financial commitments to demonstrate that they will address the proposed plan. As part of the Ready States initiative (NGA) the state began work on developing a comprehensive early childhood data system. Funding will come from a federal SLDS grant and RTT K-12 Initiative. Although the state has a strong history of financially supporting early childhood initiatives from several state agencies and private foundations and organizations, the decrease in CCDF funding over the past five years could present an uncertain future of less stable funding and could pose a risk to supporting the proposed plan in increasing the number of children with high needs being served.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

A.2.a. The state has outlined three broad areas: program quality, improving child outcomes and closing the readiness gap. Under each of these areas they have identified specific goals with measurable outcomes. For example, under program quality they say that the number of state funded programs participating in Bright Stars Tiered QRIS will increase from 93(10%) to 1,079(100%) over the grant cycle. In order to get program buy-in to reach the 100% goal, the applicant will offer several supports such as focused technical support, program improvement contracts and tiered quality incentive payments through DSHS Child Care Assistance Program. For programs serving children with high needs, the programs will receive priority to receive these incentives. These examples demonstrate that the applicant is sensitive in planning to reach out to many programs and offering them a range of incentives based upon their individualized needs. The next goal defines the benchmarks for each quality level. Another goal relates to the Kindergarten Readiness assessment and states that by December 2015, they will have begun phasing in an assessment that will be part of the Early Learning Data System. The goals identified are ambitious and achievable because they have detailed goals, key activities, a time line and people/agency responsible. A.2.b. The state has included a summary of the State Plan which begins by building on extensive information that has been collected from Kids Count data collection for over 17 years on children with high needs. The plan expands on the goals and documents as evidence on how the plan will develop a clear path towards achieving the selected criterion. Each building block of a high quality state plan is included. A.2.c. The rationale for selecting C(1) builds on the foundational work that the state has done to develop the Early Learning standards for preschool children. The plan is to move forward with the development and implement of Early Learning Standards for Infants and Toddlers. C(2) The state plans to build on their strong foundation of each component of the assessment system. D(1&2) The state will build on a Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Teachers and Teacher Assistants Plan to implement a comprehensive professional development system. E(1) By addressing this criterion, the state wants to ensure that the current work moves beyond research to piloting and implementing a kindergarten entry readiness assessment. E(2) The state will build on the current work initiated by the Ready States Initiative. The state has selected the above criterion because they recognize how each of these components will strengthen their reform agenda and also to build on the extensive work they have already completed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

A.3.a. The state created the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, a twenty four member governance body made up of directors from state agencies and leaders of early childhood organizations, philanthropy, higher education and health care. This Council is providing leadership and oversight for the Reform Plan. Eight work groups were appointed by the Council last July to advance the agenda. The lead agency, Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDOE) Commissioner, is co-leading the Council. The roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, other participating state agencies and the Early Learning Council are described in the MOU's and an assurance that all will agree to use the five components: early learning standards, program standards, a tiered QRIS and workforce competency framework and progression of credentials. The chart (A3) documents the role and responsibilities in detail. The decision making and conflict resolution processes are clear. The Early Learning Council will use a consensus style to make policy decisions. Each participating state agency will have the authority to make decisions for programs and services that they are responsible for. If conflicts arise, they will be resolved by the Education Commissioner and the Secretary of Office of Health and Human Services. Many of the participating agencies and organizations were involved in preparing the RTT-ELC application and the Council met with many early childhood programs for input. Two public forums were held to get community input. During the implementation of the grant the Council will hold forums and focus groups to obtain input and feedback from parents and families. Council members will also meet regularly with other groups. In summary, the state has given a focused attention on creating a governance structure that is clearly representative of the leaders from early learning and development programs and state agencies and they are already strategizing on implementing their

plan. b. The Early Learning Reform Plan has involved active participation from early learning programs leaders. The scope of work descriptions attached to each MOU contains detailed responsibilities that are aligned to specific criterion. The strong commitment of the participants is documented by their involvement from the beginning of the grant application and their commitment to sharing agency resources. The participating state agencies meet the definition of participating state agencies and plan to contribute approximately 57 million toward the high quality state plan. A signature from an authorized representative of each participating agency is included. c. Thirteen letters of support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations are included that demonstrate strong support for building a high quality early learning system to serve children with high needs. The applicant has created eight work groups that will represent early childhood professionals to meet the high quality plans which provides opportunities for contributions from different expertise from the ECE community. Sixty two additional letters from other stakeholders including the Governor, elected national and state representatives, school district leaders, higher education leaders, childcare and community members affirm their strong commitment to building the ELDS and aligning their resources to the reform agenda.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

A.4.a The state will align all CCDF set aside resources to support the quality improvement goals that include licensing, infant/toddler quality improvement, resource and referral and child care facilities. DOE will work to integrate preschool approval standards with the Bright Starts QRIS. Professional development funds are being aligned across the state. Medicaid billing and KIDSNET resources are available to support screening activities. The work of the data system enhancements are supported by previous funding received through grants. The applicant provides several examples of existing state agencies and private funder contributions such as Department of Human Services, who is committed to requiring all licensed programs receiving CCAP payments to participate in Bright Stars; United Way funded research and development of pilot phases of Bright Stars; and the Rhode Island Foundation provided funding for The TEACH Early Childhood Workforce Development program. b. The budget presented in charts and narrative accurately reflect the work that the state has defined to meet the RTT-ELC goals and build a high quality system for young children with high needs. Participating state agencies are contributing approximately 131 million over the life of the grant. The state's sustainability plan is to maximize the use of existing resources and focus the RTT-ELC funding to create lasting improvements in state systems that will improve the quality of early learning and development programs for young children. State leaders are committed to sustaining the reform strategies including institutionalizing the requirement that all programs participate in the TQRIS. The state is demonstrating that they have the commitment and capacity with their partners to achieve sustainability including growth.

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)

B.1. The state has developed and implemented a statewide tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) that uses a five star rating system based upon a strong research base and input from parents and providers. The Bright Stars does not currently address effective data practices but the other five program standards are addressed. The applicant will address the lack of effective data practices within the TQRIS as they review and revise the Bright Starts Program. They are gathering a wide range of stakeholders and the feedback from this group will inform the revision. The QRIS addresses three to six years in center and home settings in public and private funded programs. Once the state develops and aligns the infant/toddler standards to the QRIS, the TQRIS will serve children from 0 to six and a comprehensive system will be developed. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina oversaw a field test in 2008 of the Bright Start standards to build the capacity of the RIAEYC, the local ECE organization responsible for managing the system, to collect quality information fairly and accurately and to conduct three baseline studies. The findings of the study supports the fact that the Bright Starts is effective at differentiating the quality of programs. The Head Start and NAEYC accredited programs in the state are clustered at the top of the Bright Stars range. Given that these two programs have higher quality standards than RI licensing standards, supports the fact that Bright Starts is effective at differentiating the quality programs. The Leadership Council will revise the Bright Stars Program Standards during the first six months of the grant to include critical components of the DCYF licensing standards and RIDE Comprehensive ECE Program Standards. A detailed plan is included that identifies the key activities, responsible agency and a time line.

	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)

B.2. Bright Stars QRS is voluntary and as of October 1, 2011 has 100 participating programs. Programs are encouraged to participate through incentives such as quality improvement grants, being recognized in the media, and celebrated at an annual statewide dinner. State Pre-K programs are required to participate in Bright Stars along with programs that receive United Way funding. In order to meet the goal of 100% participation, the applicant has developed a plan that include policy and regulatory changes. For example, all licensed programs will be required to participate. This policy is a demonstrated strength because parents can be assured that they and their children are participating in high quality programs based upon measurable standards. Beginning in 2014 all early learning programs receiving state or federal funding will be required to participate in Bright Stars. The plan will support children with high needs by ensuring that all programs serving young children are on a common path to quality. Supports will be tailored to the unique culture and characteristics of each type of learning program. For example, in Spanish speaking programs, where approximately 70 percent of home day care programs reside, they make sure that Spanish speaking providers can participate in training to learn about program standards and applications are in Spanish. Also separate assessment tools will be designed for center and home based programs. The charts list the baseline and the target needed to meet the 100% participation at the end of the grant. The only target that may not be achievable is the CCDF that goes from 86 to 933, given that the subsidies have significantly decreased over the past five years which may limit access to high quality child care for low income families. The applicant does not thoroughly address policies and practices to help families afford quality other than an intent to raise the federal poverty level eligibility.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The Bright Stars rating and monitoring process is two fold. Programs must submit an application and be observed using research based tools such as an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised and Infant/Toddler Rating Scale Revised and on site checklists for Level 1. For the second tier, programs receive unannounced visits to verify structural criteria. Level 3 programs receive one or more visit that include the use of the Environment Rating Scale. For family child care, the Family Environment Rating scale is administered but the Family Child Care homes only get monitored once every two years. The Plan includes an activity to increase the frequency of licensing inspection visits annually. Bright Stars ratings are valid for three years with a requirement to submit annual reports that consist of contact and demographic information, current licenses accreditation certifications and an updated program-quality improvement plan. The three year plan with annual reports is thorough and the tools used are valid and reliable. The system ensure that programs in all settings and serving all ages of children are high quality due to the variety of valid and reliable tools that are used to assess program quality and the intensive and high quality training provided by the staff that monitor the programs. The applicant ensures trained monitors, inter-rater reliability by offering two levels of training for Bright Stars staff. The anchor level involves intensive training to reliability on each tool with a staff trainer from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute requiring all assessment staff to complete a minimum of three reliability checks with a state anchor and must have an average reliability score of a least 85 percent across their last three checks in order to be signed off. This appears to be a very thorough process. Bright Stars has one full time assessor who is a state anchor. Bright Stars has a website to communicate information about quality ratings to parents, programs are required to post their ratings, program distribute parent cards in Spanish and English to share quality information and social media marketing is used. The applicant has identified two goals to improve the monitoring of the programs and has identified the agency, key activity and time line to make these improvements.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

B.4. Early learning programs are supported through professional development, technical assistance, mental health consultation, capital, flexible affordable funding, and access to high education and scholarships to pursue degrees by many programs and agencies. Bright Stars has a Quality Improvement specialist that provides ongoing support to participating programs. As the numbers of participating programs increase, there will be a need to expand the number of positions to provide the support needed. The applicant shares a variety of resources to improve program quality that includes the Child Care Support Network, The Child Care Facilities Fund, TEACH and Bright Stars Professional Development. The applicant will provide a tiered quality incentive payment system with high quality programs receiving higher payments. In 2012 there will be a small enhanced payment of 5% to Level one programs as an incentive to join the Bright Stars QRS. The new Pre-K program offers full day child care that links working families to high quality programs. The applicant does not include information on how they support working families who have children who are not in the Pre-K programs. Most families receiving child care assistance choose regulated programs. The applicant has created a very detailed plan to promote access to high quality programs for children with high needs that has three goals, includes activities, responsible agency and time line. The state has ambitious goals of increasing the number of programs in the top tiers. For example, today there are 22 programs in tiers four and five. At the end of the grant they plan to have 323 in these levels. The number of children with high needs participating in top tiered programs will increase during the five years. For example, 64% of children with high needs are served in the state top tiered preschool state funded programs. By 2015 the goal is that 100% will be served in high quality programs. These numbers appear achievable. The applicant has included a high quality plan to achieve the goal of having 323 programs in levels four and five by implementing the following plan: a tiered quality incentive payment system, expanding technical assistance, offering program quality improvement contracts and expanding access to higher education.

	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)

B.5. After a review of the Bright Stars program standards, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Program from the U of North Carolina made recommendations to decrease the number of criteria. The applicant made changes and the final 2009 Bright Stars has 22 criteria measuring 9 program quality standards. A plan has been developed to work with an independent evaluator to validate the effectiveness at differentiating the quality of programs and to compare children in early learning and development programs to those enrolled in lower tier vs. higher tier programs. The evaluation plan is limited to Centers serving preschool children and does not include infant/toddler programs or family child care homes where many children with high needs are being served. The study will be conducted in 2014 to allow enough time to get more programs into Bright Stars. A detailed plan includes goals,

activities, agency responsible and a timeline. The planned evaluation will conduct a study to validate the redesigned and realigned Bright Starts Quality Rating and Improvement System that will include reviewing the overall program quality and classroom observations at lower and higher tiered programs. The high quality plan's first activity is to identify the evaluator and design the study. This is a reasonable plan since the data from previous evaluations would not be useful because the system has been redesigned.

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

Each State must address in its application—

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	24

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)
<p>C.1. The Department of Education and the Department of Human Services in partnership developed early childhood standards, covering all eight domains of the essential domains of School Readiness, for preschool children in 2003. A criterion for the standards was alignment with the Kindergarten Grade Level Expectations. The alignment with the Common Core Standards is part of the plan when updating the early learning standards. The DOE developed a system for supporting early childhood professionals to understand and implement the preschool standards. One thousand seven hundred individuals have completed the training. Thirty eight percent of those educators come from communities that serve children with high needs. Bright Stars requires early learning standards training certificates as evidence of teacher and administrators qualifications. The state has developed a high quality plan to design early learning standards for infants and toddlers and update the early childhood standards. A detailed plan is included that has three goals, 18 activities, agency responsible and a timeline. The high quality plan is achievable and can be successfully implemented. The development of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment will begin after the new early learning and development standards are complete to ensure alignment between and among systems. The state will build on the successful model of training early childhood professionals to train them on the new standards. Fun Family Activity cards and parent training are key activities to support the use of the new standards with families. Early learning professionals will be recruited to become members of the Early Learning Standards Advisory Team to ensure that the Standards support children with high needs. Communities serving children with high needs will have priority for professional development opportunities and parent trainings. The state has a high quality plan to update preschool standards, create infant/toddler standards, align the standards with the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, incorporate them in the Program Standards and provide professional development opportunities for ECE professionals and families. The Early Learning Standards Advisory Team will convene to begin the process of developing the standards for infants and toddlers and strengthen the preschool standards. They will reach out to national experts with knowledge of English learners and children with disabilities. After a crosswalk has been completed in each of the</p>

Essential Domains of School Readiness with the high quality criteria, Standards Development Work Teams in each domain will be formed to recommend the standards. Rhode Island will develop a process for reviewing and approving curriculum resources to ensure that they are aligned to the Early Learning and Development Standards. Curriculum choices will be available for communities that are linguistically and culturally relevant. The plan will support children with high needs because the first early childhood educators that serve these children will be invited to participate on the committees and communities serving children with high needs will be prioritized for professional development and parent trainings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

C.2 The state currently has a strong infrastructure for the developmental screening of children birth through 3 in a pediatric primary setting. Developmental screenings occur at 9, 18, and 30 month visits. Ninety seven percent of children in Rhode Island have access to health insurance which provides a system for the majority of children birth through three to be screened. For preschool children, developmental screening is universal and available through school districts. Other assessments include the Environment Rating Scales, The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System, the Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Math, and the Classroom Assessment of Supports of Emergent Bilingual Acquisition. The high quality plan for supporting effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems include three goals that include professional development opportunities, use of teaching strategies (GOLD) and increase use of developmental screening to identify children with high needs. Sample key activities include provide professional development opportunities aligned with RI Workforce Knowledge and competencies framework to support improved knowledge and competencies in EC assessment for ECE educators. Another activity is to support the use of common developmentally appropriate, valid and reliable screening instruments statewide. There are 19 additional activities with agency responsibility and a time line. The plan is comprehensive and all children with high needs will benefit from programs that will have standardized classroom assessments. Extensive training will be available for ECE educators on each type of assessment that will include understanding, administering, interpreting and using the assessments. The Plan includes specific activities to align and integrate assessments including an activity to identify and invest in technological supports to facilitate seamless effective child assessment data entry that allows teachers to collect and enter child observation data without redundancy. All of the activities identified will support the development of a comprehensive plan by making sure that assessments are coordinated, avoiding duplication and offering the professional development necessary to achieve high quality results.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

D.1. Over the past ten years Rhode Island has been working to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. A broad representation of state and Early Childhood professionals were involved over the years in the process of the development and revision work. The final draft of competencies will be presented for review and input in fall of 2011. The core competencies are organized on three core structures: the Career Lattice, Bloom's Taxonomy and Six Domains. The framework developed by the applicant demonstrates a careful thorough evidence based work that included processes that engaged professionals to update and improve standards. For example, separate competencies were designed for center based, family child care and school age workforces. The Framework promotes children learning and development because it reflects the input from Early Learning experts on the work group along with key resources used to review the competencies like the accreditation standards from NAEYC, Head Start Performance Standards, Child Care licensing regulations and competencies from other states. In addition the Core Competencies for teachers were reviewed through nine feedback sessions. The Teacher Career Lattice identifies the formal education, experience, professional development and professional activities that correspond with a teacher who is at Levels I-IV. Teachers progress from one level to the next level by a combination of formal study, experience and professional development. The criteria for teachers to progress from one level to the next is appropriate and offers a variety of methods which could support the learning styles of the ECE staff. The use of Bloom's Taxonomy addresses how knowledge and competencies should deepen over the four levels. The six domains are Health & Safety and Wellness, Family Engagement, Development and Learning, Curriculum, Observation and Assessment and Professionalism. The state has developed a high quality plan to develop and adapt these competencies to Family Childcare Providers, Early Childhood Special Education Providers and Program Administrators and align them with the professional development activities by addressing the knowledge and skills that the professional development providers must have to deliver quality training and education. Detailed activities, agencies responsibilities and a timeline demonstrate the applicant's commitment to complete the development of the competencies and use the same thorough process, for example, seeking out special educators and early intervention professionals along with state agency representatives to develop draft standards. The plan has prioritized Family Childcare Providers and Special Education Educators as the first groups to address in order to serve children with high needs. The plan includes goals, detailed activities people/agency responsible and a timeline. Professional development opportunities will be aligned with the revised competencies and higher education representatives will be part of the review to ensure alignment by cross walking higher education curriculum with the competencies. The applicant describes four progressive credentials that ECE staff may achieve as they progress through the four levels starting with level one which requires 12 credit hours in ECE. The highest, level 4, requires a Master's Degree in ECE. This is a realistic path for progression and achievable for the ECE Workforce. Postsecondary institution representatives will be assisted by a team of independent consultants to review their existing curricula. The consultants will crosswalk the curricula with the competency frameworks. Once this work has been completed, higher education professionals will participate in a day long training session to develop an action plan based upon the findings from the consultants. They will have a year to revise curricula. this appears to be a realistic time line.

	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)

D.2 The state has established a cross sector Professional Development System Planning Work Team to develop a plan that consists of six essential elements that include Professional Standards, Career Pathways, Articulation, Advisory Structure, Data and Financing and Professional Development for CCDF funded programs. It is coordinated statewide through the RIELR&R Center Providence that has a school readiness initiative called Ready to Learn Providence that has provided free professional development opportunities to over 2000 English and Spanish home and center based programs that serve children with high needs. A grant from the DOE for 3.2 million has provided college level courses and on job coaching to nearly 300 center and family care providers. The state's three public colleges are key providers of education and professional development for the workforce. The above examples demonstrates the breath and depth of effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the Framework. b. The state has adopted the TEACH Early Childhood Workforce Development Model to address compensation disparities and reduce turnover. TEACH provides scholarships and other supports to ECE educators. Currently the TEACH program offers scholarships for students pursuing AA in ECE. TEACH is a nationally recognized model of workforce development that is operating in 24 states. The increased education is linked to better compensation. This strategy is based upon strong evidence and the results will show how it increases retention. c. The state is not able to report aggregated data on the ECE workforce but they have a high quality plan with a goal to collect and report aggregated data on early childhood development, advancement and retention that will build a robust ELDS with comprehensive data on the ECE workforce through RTT-ELC funding. The plan is achievable and ambitious. d. The state does not have baseline data on the number of Early Childhood Educators nor do they have baseline data on the number of postsecondary institutions and professional develop providers with programs aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. They have set a target for ECE providers and institutions. In their high quality work plan they address in detail their plan to collect data and develop an early learning data system which shows that they have the capacity and expertise to achieve the goal on data collection. The Plan is achievable and comprehensive.

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)

E.1. The state does not have a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment but they are committed to developing and implementing one over the next four years. The evidence for this commitment is documented in the scope of work from the state agencies. Rhode Island has a number of foundation pieces that can be built upon to develop a common system. School districts are required by law to screen children for instructional literacy in reading, speaking, writing listening and mathematics. They also use the Teaching Strategies GOLD in all their preschool classroom with children birth to three with disabilities. Two major state planning efforts have included, as a goal, to develop and implement a kindergarten entry assessment. The state has a high quality plan to develop and implement a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment with eight detailed activities, identified parties responsible and a timeline. The plan states that the Kindergarten Assessment must align with the standards and address all the domains of learning and development. The Plan also states that a primary activity is to identify or develop a valid and reliable assessment. The Work Team will review a broad range of resources that include, for example, common core state standards in literacy and mathematics along with the state's learning standards and additional resources. The planning process to create this assessment is inclusive, supported by research and builds upon the essential components that the state has already completed. The plan will support children with high needs by making sure that individuals with knowledge of their needs are on the planning team and that the local education agencies will pilot and be the first to implement so that the largest number of children with high needs will be targeted more quickly to begin to close the achievement gap. The state will conduct a pilot of the assessment in 2014-15. The pilot Districts will be selected from the core communities with the largest percentages of Children with High Needs. The remaining Districts will implement the assessment by 2016-2017. Funding for the development of the kindergarten entry assessment will come from the RTT-ELC. State funding, specifically from the education formula passed by the General Assembly in 2009 requires the cost of Basic Education Program (BEP) to be covered. The BEP requires that each LEA implement a Comprehensive Assessment System will cover the implementation costs.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	14

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

E.2. The state has several building blocks to create an early learning data system system and in June 2011 the RI Early Learning Council approved a plan to build a coordinated system. The state currently has six separate databases managed by four separate State departments and one nonprofit organization. The high quality plan includes four goals, key activities, agency responsible, a time line and an implementation plan. The Plan will include all the Essential Data Elements. Some of the activities include: establish cross department, public-private planning and oversight for the data system, inventory existing data systems. The Planning and Governing body which will be established by the Early Learning Council, for the Data System design, will ensure shared data access and use across state agencies and intermediary organizations. The plan for the data system will be an expansion of the RIDE Data Warehouse and build on the data expertise and the infrastructure of the State Longitudinal Data System. Because the plan will include a cross departmental public-private governing body and will build on its current infrastructure, it is very probable that it will achieve its goals. The applicant will identify and develop data-system reporting mechanisms for compliance reporting, continuous quality improvement and key policy questions. Again the activities listed to achieve the goals include developing polices and strategies regarding data access and quality. The applicant will provide training, technical assistance and incentives for early learning programs and State administrators to support data entry and data transfer which will support the generation of information that is timely, relevant and accessible. Funding from this grant will build technological capacity of the data users statewide. The Planning and Governing Body will ensure that the Data Systems Oversight Requirements will be implemented. The applicant does not include enough detail to evaluate how the requirements will be implemented.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	232

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--</p> <p>(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (P)(2)		
<p>P.2.The Bright Starts tiered QRIS will be revised and expanded to include all state regulated Early Learning and Development Programs including all licensed childcare and early learning programs and all center based learning programs operated by the public schools The applicant lists advantages to this plan that make it a strong approach. For example, it will help parents understand enrollment options, it will expand the real time data available about program quality and it will improve coordination and collaboration among community-based programs ad public school programs. All licensed programs will be required to enter the TQRIS as part of the licensing process. RIDE Approval Standards, licensing standards and Bright Starts Program Standards will all be aligned so that there can be efficiencies in terms of staffing and clarity on what the rating means in terms of program quality. Professional development along with training and technical assistance resources will be available to help programs serving children with high needs meet the standards. Rhode Island's first priority is to strengthen family childcare programs licensing practices and policies that are already regulated. It does not plan to expand child care regulation to include providers for 2 or 3 unrelated children until they have completed reform strategies outlined in their plan. This is a good decision because they need to focus on strengthening their monitoring and enforcement policies and procedures because Rhode Island has been ranked near the bottom of State ranking for child-care licensing oversight and enforcement.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>E.2. The state has not implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The applicant did meet a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points on E.1.</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

Rhode Island has definitely met the absolute priority. The state has developed a comprehensive plan to build a high quality Early Learning and Development System. The state has a history of collaborative partnerships among state agencies and early childhood organizations and shows strong evidence of building upon these committed partnerships. Each component of the system will be enhanced or developed and the full system will be implemented by 2015. The applicant has addressed how the system will address the needs of children with high needs through each high quality plan presented for Kindergarten Entry Assessment, a great Early Childhood Workforce, a Tiered Quality Rating System and Early Learning and Development Standards and a Comprehensive Assessment System. The budget reflects appropriate funding for the areas they have developed high quality plans. In evaluating the focused investment areas, the applicant has demonstrated many strengths. The high quality plan for developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression is thorough and comprehensive in building upon past work, involving a broad group in the planning process, using research base evidence and aligning the knowledge and competencies related to the Early Learning and Development Standards. The state is building on its previous successful work of developing learning standards for preschool children as they begin to develop standards for infants and toddlers. They have developed a detailed process that is inclusive of ECE experts and nationally recognized research. They will ask for input from the communities as part of the process, there is evidence that the standards will be aligned with the K-3 academic standards. The state has a well developed and comprehensive health screening assessment process and they will align this process to address the behavioral and development needs of children with High Needs. The High Quality Plan for providing and expanding access to professional development has the following three goals: increase available and accessibility of high quality professional-development opportunities, provide a continuum of supports along an articulated career pathway and collect and report aggregated data are measurable and achievable. A cross sector professional development planning team will use national resources from NAEYC to guide their work and they will build on the work they have accomplished in developing a plan for all the essential elements. The state has a detailed plan to develop a kindergarten entry assessment which has all the components of a high quality plan and has a high probability of successful implementation. The state has a head start in developing a coordinated early learning data system with their selection by the National Governors Association (NGA) to participate in the Ready State Initiative. The initiative has provided opportunities for the state to create a planning team do site visits to a recognized state for having more of the Essential Data Elements than any other state. Another strength is that the state has a universal database of young children starting at birth through the Health Department called KIDSNET.