

Early Learning Challenge

2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



JUNE 2017





**Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge
Annual Performance Report
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Illinois

2016

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General Information

1. PR/Award#: S412A130011

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Reporting Period Information

5. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2016 To: 12/31/2016

Indirect Cost Information

6. Indirect Costs

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement(s) approved by the Federal Government? Yes No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement(s): From: 07/01/2016 To: 06/30/2017

Approving Federal agency: ED HHS Other Specify other: _____

(Submit current indirect cost rate agreement with this report.)

Executive Summary

For the reporting year, please provide a summary of your State's (1) accomplishments, (2) lessons learned, (3) challenges, and (4) strategies you will implement to address those challenges.

Accomplishments

Illinois' Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant initiatives reflect the State's three strategic reform priorities. In each of these areas, Illinois has accomplished a great deal in its fourth year of implementation.

Priority 1: Deepening the integration of State supports to create a unified framework for all early learning and development programs.

In 2016, Illinois continued the strong momentum of the first three years for its system-building efforts. Accomplishments include:

- Continuation of strong progress towards program participation goals for ExceleRate Illinois during an unprecedented and ongoing state fiscal crisis. By the end of 2016, Illinois had met 89% of its ambitious performance measure targets. Nearly 3,000 early childhood programs in Illinois achieved quality recognition by the end of 2016. These include:
 - 100% of the State's school-based Preschool for All programs, from zero in 2012
 - 73% of the Head Start sites in Illinois, up from 3% in 2012
 - 44% of the licensed child care centers, up from 17% in 2012 - nearly triple
 - 5% of the licensed family child homes, up from 2% in 2012 - more than double
- Continued growth in the number of early childhood professionals holding one or more Gateways Credential. In 2016, 4,578 credentials were awarded, exceeding targets in all categories: Early Childhood Education (ECE), Infant Toddler Credential, and the Illinois Director Credential. At the end of Calendar Year 2016, a total of 16,440 individuals currently hold Gateways Credentials, including:
 - 8, 224 ECE Level 2 and above (159% of 2016 target)
 - Level 4 (AA degree): 3,372
 - Level 5 (BA degree): 3,142
 - 3,375 Infant Toddler Credentials (146% of 2016 target)
 - 1,657 Illinois Director Credentials (129% of 2016 target)
- Implemented pilot to test-launch three new credentials, with the following awards earned in 2016:
 - Technical Assistance Credential: 53
 - Family Support Specialist Credential: 115
 - Family Child Care Credential: 167
- Deepened integration and alignment of day care licensing system with both ExceleRate and Gateways, moving towards a more efficient and effective system of monitoring and continuous quality improvement.
- Determined school readiness indicators across five domains of development to be collected statewide during the 2017-18 school year. Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), which is aligned

to the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, is now available at no charge to public schools statewide.

- Completed inaugural report of matched data, providing for the first time an unduplicated view of children enrolled in Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative, and the Child Care Assistance Program.
- Two-thirds of Illinois' Institutions of Higher Education with early childhood programs (20 universities and 37 community colleges representing all regions of the state) participated in the EPPI Grant Program to collaboratively redesign early childhood educator preparation programs with focus on improving articulation and transfer pathways, meeting new state standards for licensure, and including Gateways Credentials as stackable elements within degree programs.
- Expansion of Early Childhood Interagency Team (IAT) to include additional state agencies, the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth, and re-boot of IAT purpose to ensure continuation of strong collaboration as RTT-ELC funded initiatives wrap up.

Priority 2: Connecting the most-at-risk children with the supports and services they need.

Although Illinois has an adequate level of services for children with high needs, too many of the most vulnerable young children in the state are not being served. Through its State Plan, Illinois is working to identify and remove barriers to participation for these children and their families. Accomplishments in 2016 include:

- 91,232 children with high needs are enrolled in the top tiers of ExceleRate (Gold and Awards of Excellence)
 - Nearly 30% of children from birth to age five in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are cared for in a Gold-rated center or home, up from 13% at the inception of RTT-ELC.
 - Another 27% of CCAP children are enrolled in programs rated Bronze or Silver.
 - All children served in school-based Preschool for All programs are enrolled in a quality-recognized program, 74% at or above the Gold Circle.
 - The upcoming re-competition of the Early Childhood Block Grant is expected to include a competitive priority for community-based Preschool for All programs with quality ratings.
- Innovation Zones in 11 communities are demonstrating effective strategies for identifying, engaging, and enrolling children with high needs in high quality programs, such as:
 - Coordinated outreach, screening, and enrollment across Preschool for All, Head Start, and child care programs within a community
 - Building referral pipelines with local partners to engage priority populations including children who are experiencing homelessness, involved in the child welfare system, have teen parents, or are recent immigrants or refugees
 - Forging partnerships with local support system --food pantries, refugee organizations, public housing, hospitals, home visiting programs, public schools
 - Developing parent leadership/parent ambassadors (including grandparents)
 - Creation of "warm line" to provide information and referrals to all parents

Priority 3: Increasing program quality: From adequate to good and from good to great

Illinois recognizes that all early childhood programs --even those already meeting high quality standards --need support and guidance in developing and implementing continuous program improvement strategies. Research

demonstrates what is required in terms of program intensity, rigorous curriculum, and high-quality teacher-child interaction to significantly impact the developmental trajectory of children with high needs. Illinois is working to translate that research into strengthened practices in classrooms across the State.

Accomplishments in 2016 include:

- Achievement of 84 Awards of Excellence - 21 for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, 26 for Family and Community Engagement, 11 for Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practice, 21 for Preschool Teaching and Learning, and 5 for Infant and Toddler Services.
- Implementation of comprehensive strategy (targeted outreach, financial incentives, and bundled training) to promote participation in the Bronze Circle of Quality, resulting in a 7-fold increase in participation. In 2016, 392 centers and 138 Family Child Care homes achieved this level of quality.
- Following the completion of the Head Start/Early Head Start expedited pathway, launched the “Presumptive Silver” initiative in 2016, which will enable more robust participation of Head Start programs in ExceleRate in 2017.
- Innovation Zones developed and demonstrated remarkable capacity to support the full range of early learning and development programs engaging in continuous quality improvement activities. Strategies have included ExceleRate cohorts, communities of practice, directors' roundtables, coaching and mentoring models, and cross-sector professional development. The most striking results come from Greater East St. Louis (GESTL), one of Illinois lowest income communities. GESTL exceeded the statewide goal with 91% of its child care centers above Licensing and 27% achieving the Gold Circle of Quality.

Lessons Learned

The mindset of continuous quality improvement (CQI) has permeated RTT-ELC funded initiatives and is essential for Illinois' continued progress towards ambitious goals for system transformation. CQI requires strength, resiliency, flexibility, and adaptive capability, not just among individual providers, but also within the system itself. Policymakers, program managers, and implementers throughout the state infrastructure have been deliberately and intentionally focused on the implementation processes and activities of ExceleRate. This has been accomplished through the flexibility of policy, which is open to adjustment based on feedback from the many perspectives of multiple stakeholders throughout the state. RTT subcontractors have reinforced this mindset by remaining open to meeting programs where they are, and adapting plans to move them toward their goals incrementally. Programs, in turn, value the supports and opportunities to advance practice at every level, and remain engaged and invested in improvement - as summarized by one panelist at a regional CQI gathering: “Just because I'm not sick doesn't mean I can't get better.” In spite of challenging financial circumstances in our state, outreach and engagement activities, training and technical assistance resources and special initiatives remain flexible and resilient to the changing circumstances and context, which surround them.

Another profound lesson learned from RTT-ELC is the extraordinary power of communities --when provided the opportunity, resources, and explicit permission to collaborate and innovate. Through our community systems development work, nearly two-dozen communities have built enduring local capacity to work together to identify, engage, and enroll high needs children in high quality programs. They are also demonstrating a range of approaches to support the ongoing work enhancing program quality. Factors for success in those communities include:

- Use of data from multiple sources to inform planning and implementation;
- Dedicated staff at the local level to facilitate cross-sector coordination;
- Coaching, peer learning opportunities, and knowledge of tools and processes for effective collaboration;
- Feedback loop between local projects and state-level policymakers that enable barriers to be

communicated and remediated quickly.

The early childhood system is taking to heart lessons learned from community-level efforts. The most notable example is found in the Illinois State Board of Education's FY2018 redesign of the Early Childhood Block Grant. This recompetition promotes a community systems approach to program development, an effort that is being supported by public and private organizations through the creation and dissemination of tools, resources, and technical assistance to support local programs to work collaboratively within a community to build pipelines and comprehensive service networks.

One of the most remarkable takeaways is how hard the early learning system is willing and able to work within a resource-constrained environment. That said, ensuring equitable access to effective services for children with high needs is not sustainable without intentional and strategic policymaking across our State's child and family serving systems. Illinois' current fiscal crisis aside, early learning programs have historically been funded at levels below what cost models suggest is necessary to implement and sustain best practice for young children. Through ExceleRate, we have raised the level of expectations for child care, including requirements for credentialed staff, but did not fully compensate programs for the higher costs associated with higher quality. It did not escape notice that most of the Awards of Excellence achieved by child care centers had collaborative funding (Preschool for All and/or Head Start). That fact is confirmation that funding really matters, and adequacy of funding is essential to program capacity to implement and sustain program quality at scale. Until and unless we create other financing strategies, the promotion of blended funding models along with the continuation of differentiated rates within the Child Care Assistance program are the most important policy levers we have in Illinois to ensure that children with high needs have equitable access to high quality early learning programs.

Challenges & Strategies to Address Challenges

In the fourth year of the grant, Illinois is facing obstacles and barriers to full implementation of the ambitious goals we set forth for ourselves in the Phase II Application. As described throughout this report, OECD strives to find creative strategies to overcome those obstacles. However, there are some that may not have a readily visible solution. The unrelenting reality of Illinois' fiscal situation, reduction in state agency capacity, and sense of instability and uncertainty throughout state-funded programs, have challenged our State's efforts to advance an ambitious agenda of system-building and continuous quality improvement.

Data system integration work continues to be a challenge in Illinois. Illinois chose to build its early learning data system in conjunction with the State's larger P-20 Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). This has many advantages, including far greater sustainability of the system. However, it has been challenging to move this complex work forward at the pace originally outlined in the State Plan. Data sharing agreements have encountered numerous delays; most recently, delays have been caused by new policies around information security that requires inter-agency alignment. However, OECD is committed to working with its public and private partners to ensure the long-term sustainability needs of the data systems are met. Indeed, data-informed decision-making is a top priority for the new gubernatorial administration, and there are several initiatives underway in the State that are well-aligned with RTT-ELC projects. OECD and its partners at Participating State Agencies are working to prioritize the early childhood part of this work and make any adjustments necessary to complete planned data integration and support research and evaluation.

Competing priorities and demands on state agencies have also presented challenges to the full implementation of Illinois' early childhood system reform agenda. This tension is most visible within the child care system, as the State agency responsible for CCDF administration contends with both new federal requirements from CCDBG reauthorization and unprecedented fiscal strain. Implementation of GATA (Grants Accountability and Transparency Act) has also had an impact as agencies adjust to new operational processes. The IAT continue to offer opportunities for conversation as to how it is possible for agencies to continue development of core infrastructure while advancing work toward new priorities set forth by agency leadership.

A final challenge is with regard to the continuation of cross-agency infrastructure and leadership for highly collaborative cross-system projects without RTT-ELC funding. The core cross-agency functions of workforce

development, data and outcomes management, ExceleRate policy and governance, community systems, and Interagency Team leadership have been funded through RTT-ELC. In addition, there is no longer dedicated funding to staff Early Learning Council Committees. Over the past year, the committee and subcommittee structure has been streamlined with an eye towards reduced staffing capacity. The diminished capacity to lead and support cross-agency projects will have significant impact on early childhood system building when RTT-ELC funding ends. Moreover, state agencies continue to lose experienced staff (through resignation, removal, and retirement) in programmatic areas responsible for early childhood. This loss of institutional knowledge about core programs and systems is a significant challenge. Through the Interagency Team, the Early Learning Council, and involvement with national organizations that support states such as BUILD and the National Governor's Association, we continue to engage and develop emerging leadership around shared goals and strategies for our State's children.

Concluding Thoughts

When Illinois first applied for the RTT-ELC Grant in 2011, the Illinois Early Learning Council and leadership in the Governor's Office and state agencies proposed an ambitious reform agenda to work towards a shared vision for an early childhood system that prioritized children with highest needs. Not winning the competition in the first year provided a critical opportunity for Illinois' early childhood system leaders to commit to that vision --with or without the federal resources to help it along. When awarded a Phase II grant, Illinois was ready to take on the challenging work of implementing an array of cross-sector initiatives, involving dozens of organizations in the public and private sectors.

Over the course of the grant, Illinois and the early childhood system experienced a myriad of challenges. For nearly half of the grant period, Illinois has been without a fully enacted state budget. Ongoing payment delays to providers have put undue strain on programs and engendered a sense of instability and vulnerability. Leadership changes, both anticipated and unexpected, have also challenged the early childhood system and tested its resiliency and adaptability. And still, the early childhood community has persisted. Programs have continued to engage in continuous quality improvement activities and strive for excellence. The number of children who are enrolled in high quality programs continues to increase, most notably among children in the Child Care Assistance Program.

The Early Learning Challenge provided the critical, first foundation-building investment for a sustainable system that prioritizes equitable access to effective services. With continued focused resources and efforts, Illinois has the opportunity to see exponential gains for communities to strengthen and children to learn, grow, and fulfill their highest potential.

Successful State Systems

Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State (Section A(3) of Application)

Governance Structure

Please provide any relevant information and updates related to the governance structure for the RTT-ELC State Plan (specifically, please include information on the organizational structure for managing the grant, and the governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, State Advisory Council, and Participating State Agencies).

Illinois has continued to focus on implementing early childhood systems reform that will lead to an increase in the number of children - especially children with high needs - who enter kindergarten ready to engage in a challenging curriculum. Despite changes in leadership across state agencies and unprecedented state budget challenges, the state's early childhood agenda has remained committed in 2016 to its three strategic priorities: (1) deepening the integration of state supports to create a unified framework for all early learning and development (ELD) systems; (2) connecting the most at-risk children with the services and supports they need; and, (3) increasing the quality of both learning environments and instruction in early learning and development programs (from "adequate to good" and from "good to great").

The vision for system reform has remained steadfast throughout a series of increasingly challenging budget years and a change in the governorship. Capacity built within the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), the Illinois Early Learning Council (IELC), and among private-sector intermediaries who have done the heavy lifting of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) account for the continuation of vision and purpose during challenging fiscal times.

Illinois has continued to effectively implement the governance structure that was described in the RTT-ELC State Plan. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) serves as the fiscal agent and OECD manages the grant, including monitoring of contracts and work performed by sub-grantees. An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between ISBE, OECD, Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) provides the framework to accomplish the work of the grant. IDHS, IDCFS, and IBHE voucher ISBE directly for funds to support vendors that are contracted to do the work within each agency's scope. OECD works closely with ISBE to monitor the entire budget for the grant and approves all sub-contractor's budgets prior to grants or contracts being awarded.

OECD monitors all of the projects and tasks in the Scope of Work to ensure timely completion and also implements the State's monitoring plan. Staff from the individual State agencies participate in monthly and quarterly monitoring meetings with the subcontractors to ensure that RTT-ELC work is well-coordinated with other efforts to strengthen and effectively administer the State's early learning system.

The Interagency Team (IAT), which consists of early childhood leadership from each of the Participating State Agencies (ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS) has successfully led the implementation of the RTT-ELC state plan. In 2015, the IAT grew to include staff leadership from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Board of Higher Education. IAT has continued to meet at least monthly to ensure the cross-agency coordination necessary to successfully complete the RTT-ELC scope of work as well as move toward a more unified early childhood system in Illinois. The Illinois Early Learning Council continues to play a key advisory role for the implementation of the RTT-ELC. Both the full IELC and its Executive Committee have been updated at every meeting on the implementation of the grant and consulted for input on major initiatives. The Executive Committee receives more detailed implementation information and provides input to the IAT and OECD on implementation direction. The IELC Committees have also played a key role in developing the policy for the implementation of RTT-ELC objectives.

In 2016, Governor Rauner launched the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth ("the Children's Cabinet") as an effort to align state agency efforts towards shared goals and outcomes for children and youth. This initiative,

along with the administration's complementary Health and Human Services Transformation, has highlighted the need for a higher level of interagency coordination. OECD and the Early Learning Council worked to ensure good alignment between Children's Cabinet goals and metrics (for example, Cabinet indicators mirror those on the Early Learning Council dashboard). Advancing the early childhood workforce was selected as one of three projects to be worked on by the Cabinet in 2016-17. This project builds on RTT-ELC workforce development projects around credentials and alignment with higher education.

Stakeholder Involvement

Describe State progress in involving 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 implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

The Illinois Early Learning Council (IELC), which functions as Illinois' State Advisory Council, is comprised of over 75 members from throughout the early childhood spectrum. In 2015, the IELC restructured, reducing the number of committees and subcommittees and forming new charges. Through this structure, hundreds of early childhood stakeholders from across the state, including parents of young children, participate in the state early childhood system. The Council has made it a priority to ensure stakeholder input in the implementation of the RTT-ELC. The State has sought input on all major implementation decisions related to its State Plan through Council committees, other state-level advisory committees (e.g., the Child Care Advisory Committee, Professional Development Advisory Committee, Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) Implementation Advisory Committee, and the Day Care Licensing Advisory Committee), and/or through special purpose ad-hoc committees.

In addition to these more formal opportunities for stakeholders to provide input, OECD staff has prioritized being accessible to providers and parents to receive timely input. OECD staff have presented at numerous conferences and local meetings around the state to communicate the State's vision and plan, and to hear and respond to questions and concerns raised by practitioners and other stakeholders. The OECD and ExceleRate Illinois websites have a "contact us" function, which is frequently used by stakeholders to communicate their thoughts about the system development work. In addition, OECD publishes a monthly newsletter, which also generates dialogue about emerging trends and initiatives in the field.

Another avenue for stakeholder input is through OECD's monitoring system for sub-recipients. In the first few months of the grant, OECD began quarterly meetings with sub-recipients as a tactic to ensure there was shared knowledge of what everyone else was doing. Over the course of the years, these meetings grew larger in size and more substantial in conversation, often including additional cross-sector meetings organized by sub-recipients themselves. Illinois' sub-recipients found great value in these cross-sector conversations, learning and building on one another's work, avoiding duplication of and leveraging one another's efforts, and collaborating when opportunities presented themselves.

Proposed Legislation, Policies, or Executive Orders

Describe any changes or proposed changes to state legislation, budgets, policies, executive orders and the like that had or will have an impact on the RTT-ELC grant. Describe the expected impact and any anticipated changes to the RTT-ELC State Plan as a result.

Illinois Budget

Illinois' fiscal challenges continued and worsened during 2016. For 364 days of FY 2016, Illinois was without a state budget. Illinois' State Fiscal Year (FY) runs from July 1 until June 30; FY 2016 ended on 6/30/16 and FY

2017 began on 7/1/16. Certain General Fund spending continued in the absence of a budget, including grants for elementary and secondary education (which includes the Early Childhood Block Grant, the funding source for Preschool for All and the Prevention Initiative). However, early childhood programs within the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)--child care, Early Intervention, some home visiting programs, and other family services--were not appropriated. A number of programs were able to continue operating without a budget or appropriation because of consent decrees, court orders, or legislation that allowed for use of federal funds.

In late June 2016, Illinois lawmakers passed an 18-month "stop-gap" budget, which retro-funded FY2016 and the first half of FY 2017 --at a level that was just 65% of FY 15 appropriations. The Illinois State Board of Education received a full FY17 budget, but for the rest of the state the "stop gap" budget expired on 12/31/16. As of this writing, Illinois is again without a state budget.

Despite the State's fiscal challenges, Governor Rauner and the Illinois General Assembly understand the value and critical importance of early childhood education. The FY 17 ISBE enacted budget contained a \$75 million increase in the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), which supports Preschool for All and the Prevention Initiative, which restored funding cuts from past years and enabled Illinois to meet its commitment under the federal Preschool Expansion Grant.

Impact of Budget Crisis on the Early Childhood System and RTT-ELC Initiatives

Illinois' ongoing fiscal crisis continues to contribute to significant volatility and instability in the early childhood system. Lack of a fully enacted budget and other related fiscal issues has also significantly impacted payment to providers across the early childhood system, as substantial payment delays have become routine. The home visiting system has been particularly impacted, with layoffs and caseload reductions reported by community agencies.

The child care system has also not fully rebounded from emergency rules put in place in 2015 that limited Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) eligibility. While the rules were rescinded in late 2015, eligibility has not been fully restored, which has reduced the overall caseload. As shown in Table B(4)(c)(2), the number of children with high needs participating in programs receiving Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF), has decreased from the baseline of 115,188 in 2012 to 71,912 in 2016, a reduction of 37.5%.

Impact of Illinois' fiscal situation is noticeable within state agencies. As mentioned earlier, there have been important changes in key leadership within early childhood programs along with critical staff in both programmatic and operational staff. This decreasing human capacity within state agencies has resulted in slower processes, including budget and contract amendments and decision making.

Challenges outlined in this section have not substantially changed Illinois' planned work under the RTT-ELC grant. While some projects have proceeded more slowly than expected, and ExceleRate participation was clearly impacted in 2015, Illinois has continued to make steady progress towards its performance measures.

Legislative and Administrative Action

On a more positive note, a number of enacted and proposed regulation changes within early childhood programs reflect and embed a systemic approach:

- Senate Bill 238 codified an agreement to increase the Infant/Toddler Set-aside within the ECBG from 14% to 20% by increasing the allocation of new funds for birth to three programs until the 20% level is reached.
- The General Assembly passed a bill to add social-emotional screenings to the school health examination. This bill is awaiting the Governor's signature.
- A proposed bill to prohibit expulsion in publicly funded Pre-K programs was introduced in 2016, but did not progress to passage. The bill will be amended and reintroduced in 2017 to include bolstered

licensing standards.

Licensing standards for Day Care Homes and Group Day Care Homes have also been amended to reflect new Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requirements.

Also in 2016, Illinois submitted an 1115 Medicaid waiver. Included in that application is a proposal to expand early childhood mental health consultation within early childhood programs. If approved, this will provide a unique opportunity within the early childhood system to expand the reach of consultation and move towards more systemic approaches to this critical resource.

Participating State Agencies

Describe any changes in participation and commitment by any of the Participating State Agencies in the State Plan.

Despite changes in leadership and key staff positions, there are no changes in participation and commitment of Participating State Agencies.

High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) (Section B(1) of Application).

During this reporting year of RTT-ELC implementation, has the State made progress in **developing or revising** a TQRIS that is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards?

If yes, these standards currently apply to (please check all that apply):

- State-funded preschool programs
- Early Head Start and Head Start programs
- Early Learning and Development programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA
- Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA
- Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program:
 - Center-based
 - Family Child Care

If yes, these standards currently apply to (please check all that apply):

- Early Learning and Development Standards
- A Comprehensive Assessment System
- Early Childhood Educator Qualifications
- Family Engagement Strategies
- Health Promotion Practices
- Effective Data Practices

The State has made progress in ensuring that (please check all that apply):

- TQRIS Program Standards are measurable
- TQRIS Program Standards meaningfully differentiate program quality levels
- TQRIS Program Standards reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children
- The TQRIS is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Describe progress made during the reporting year in **developing or revising** a TQRIS that is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards. Please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the four-year grant period.

In 2016, Illinois continued its substantial progress implementing the cross-sector Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), ExceleRate Illinois, and completed the transition of its previous quality rating system (Quality Counts) to new, expanded, and significantly higher standards. ExceleRate Illinois is a cross-sector, five-level QRIS that is inclusive of all early learning and development programs serving children from birth to kindergarten entry in group settings. These include licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, State-funded preschool in public schools, and Head Start programs in community- and school-based settings.

- In 2013, the State focused its system development activities on establishing common standards for licensed child care centers, school-based preschool classrooms, and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. These standards were cross-walked across all settings and program requirements. Procedures and protocols to transition existing quality-rated child care centers were developed and implemented.
- In 2014, the State focused on the development of standards for licensed family child care and group homes, establishment of the Awards of Excellence (Tier 5 of ExceleRate Illinois), and the formation and piloting of expedited pathways for Head Start programs to achieve quality ratings. Multiple national accreditations were approved for reciprocity with ExceleRate, and multiple curricula were reviewed for alignment with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (IELGs) and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS). Standards and evidence requirements for Tier 5/Awards of Excellence were completed, and procurement for supports and technical assistance for programs to achieve Tier 5 was implemented for the five content areas of Preschool Teaching and Learning, Infant and Toddler Services, Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, Family and Community Engagement, and Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practice.
- In 2015, ExceleRate Illinois for family child care was launched with full transition and alignment protocols for existing quality-rated homes, and enrollment of new home providers. This included creation of a custom pathway for homes accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC). Integrated with this work was the pilot of a new Family Child Care Credential, and the development of a full series of ExceleRate-required trainings embedded in that credential. Robust professional development and technical assistance supports were fully implemented for the Awards of Excellence, along with the development of application processes and portfolio review protocols. Content area experts were recruited to serve on advisory review panels in the five practice domains.
- In 2016, all initiatives continued to be informed by ongoing implementation through the lens of system-wide continuous quality improvement. Awards of Excellence supports and technical assistance continued in 2016, with a total of six full Awards of Excellence application cycles implemented to date. All licensed child care centers provisionally-enrolled in ExceleRate from Quality Counts completed their alignment to the new standards; licensed family child care homes are 65% complete in their alignment. Curriculum reviews for alignment with state early learning standards continued, and a sixth national accreditation, AdvancEd, was approved for reciprocity with ExceleRate. Special initiatives were launched to engage providers in training to achieve the Bronze Circle of Quality. Based on outcomes from the two-year pilot of the expedited Head Start pathway, presumptive eligibility for the Silver Circle of Quality was approved for all directly-operated Head Start sites based entirely on federal monitoring results. Enrollment protocols were developed, and will be implemented in 2017.

Quality of Implementation to Date

Illinois has sustained a high quality of implementation among all its quality improvement activities. The entire system is focused on continuous quality improvement, and that lens has been deliberately and intentionally focused on the implementation processes and activities of ExceleRate Illinois, in addition to individual providers. This has been accomplished through the flexibility of policy, which is open to adjustment based on feedback

from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders throughout the state. It has been reinforced by the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) subcontractors, who remain open to changing plans, and adjust content and delivery of their many initiatives in order to remain nimble and relevant in this endeavor. In spite of challenging financial circumstances in our state, outreach and engagement activities, training and technical assistance resources, and special initiatives remain flexible and resilient to the changing circumstances and context which surround them.

There has been flexibility of multiple policies with regard to ExceleRate implementation. Most of these decisions are the result of aspirational program standards which existing resources, infrastructure and state conditions cannot yet fully support. As a "block" system QRIS, we are mindful of the fact that every program that falls down because of one standard may in turn lose any incentive to meet the other 14 standards. This contradicts the entire purpose of the QRIS; and as a result, we focus on maintaining program engagement with the use of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) where warranted. Examples include:

- We have departed from "all or nothing" approaches on assessment results, particularly with regard to threshold scores on ERS, CLASS or PAS. Programs are afforded a prioritized "re-do" on assessments (or portions thereof) where they fell short, while items that met standards are allowed to stand without re-verification. In addition to creating efficiencies for the state, this keeps programs engaged in ExceleRate as partners in our statewide efforts for continuous quality improvement.
- Our curriculum standards require research-based approaches which demonstrate alignment with the IL Early Learning Guidelines (IELGs) for birth - age 3, and/or the IL Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) for ages 3-5. While the vast majority of published curricula in widespread use in the state (Creative Curriculum, High Scope, etc.) have been "crosswalked" for verification with state requirements, many providers still use self-developed curriculum. We have implemented a simplified "individual provider crosswalk" for these providers, and created accompanying training resources. Until all these processes can be implemented at scale throughout the state, providers may submit a narrative summary describing their research base and alignment with IELGs/IELDS.
- Compliance with the Inclusion Standard requires MOUs with both Early Intervention and the Local Education Agency (LEA), which is the local school district in Illinois. The ability for child care centers and family child care homes to comply with this expectation has been sorely tested by our state's budget crisis. Accordingly, we have focused on developing statewide template documents and protocols, and require training in their implementation, to demonstrate compliance with this standard.
- Because they are largely outside the control of program operators and owners, staff credential and training requirements require significant flexibility in order to maintain program engagement and eligibility. Turnover in child care centers is historically close to 30%; with IL's budget crisis and the accompanying stress on the system as a whole, it is much higher. Provisions are made for turnover, which in turn extends compliance deadlines with CQI, and progress toward meeting requirements.

Strategies to Ensure Measurable Progress

The major challenge to meeting the State's performance measures is achieving the overall numbers. ExceleRate Illinois is an ambitious and aspirational program. In addition to incorporating State-funded preschool and Head Start into the system, there are very specific goals for increasing the numbers of child care centers and family child care homes with quality ratings. The child care center goal is to achieve 50% with quality recognition. After nearly tripling participation, Illinois currently stands within reach of this goal at 44%. The goal for Gold Circle and above is 25%; it is currently at 18%.

The State's overall strategy is to concentrate more on the first portion of this target than the second: get them in! The final accreditation crosswalks and continued outreach to Head Start programs represent the best opportunity to significantly move towards the Gold Circle target. Another portion of the Gold Circle target consists of moving programs from Silver to Gold - a worthy goal, but one which shifts rather than expands ExceleRate enrollment, and suppresses the ability to accomplish 50% engagement overall. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has launched a final round of incentives and other large-scale Bronze initiatives to those programs not yet engaged in ExceleRate. It is anticipated that this will play a significant role in crossing the finish line. The new option for Head Start enrollment with presumptive eligibility at the Silver Circle, as well as an assessment for Gold, is another opportunity to push toward the targets.

With the opportunity of the No-Cost Extension, Illinois is well-positioned to achieve its performance measures by the end of 2017.

Promoting Participation in the TQRIS (Section B(2) of Application)

Describe progress made during the reporting year in promoting participation in the TQRIS. Please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the four-year grant period.

The State implements a multitude of strategies to promote participation in ExceleRate Illinois, and to create the conditions for success for the many programs already engaged in the quality rating system as RTT-ELC transforms the landscape for early learning in Illinois. The State has established recognition and reciprocity for multiple forms of evidence to engage and enable new programs from a variety of settings to demonstrate compliance with the standards of ExceleRate Illinois. Several initiatives were undertaken and/or enhanced in 2016 to articulate the diverse routes to achieve recognition in ExceleRate Illinois. These efforts are described in more detail below.

Engaging New Programs with ExceleRate Illinois

In 2016, 427 new child care centers achieved ExceleRate ratings. Forty-four percent of all licensed child care centers in Illinois now have a quality rating, with 18% at or above the Gold Circle of Quality. From the inception of RTT-ELC, child care center enrollment in ExceleRate has increased by 159%, and now stands at 1,314. Of these, 392 are Bronze, 373 are Silver, 513 are Gold, and 36 have achieved Tier 5/Awards of Excellence.

In 2016, 148 new family child care homes achieved ExceleRate ratings. More than 5% of all licensed family child care homes in Illinois now have a quality rating, doubling their participation in ExceleRate since its standards were launched. Currently there are 460 family child care homes with a quality rating: 138 Bronze, 286 Silver, and 36 Gold.

Quality Specialists with the State's Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies continue their outreach to engage new programs, and have developed a variety of tools to help assess their readiness to work towards specific Circles of Quality. They provide consultation and technical assistance to help programs stay on track with their Continuous Quality Improvement Plans. This is especially important for those programs in the Silver Circle of Quality, as the task now turns to facilitating their improvements to achieve the Gold Circle. In 2016, CCR&R staff provided 17,350 hours of technical support to 2,505 programs: 1,186 child care centers and 1,319 family child care homes. Sixty percent of these hours (10,411) were devoted to in-depth, on-site consultation to 665 centers and 589 homes.

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) is the administering agency for ExceleRate Illinois, the Gateways to Opportunity Registry, Gateways Credentials, and multiple training and other initiatives, which comprise the infrastructure of the State's early learning system. INCCRRA merits special

mention for its prompt response to feedback, and its ability to adjust systems and customize process and protocols for the large influx of new programs and their accompanying constituencies, which might have easily overwhelmed them. It is one thing to double a program from 100 to 200; something entirely different to nearly triple from 507 to 1,314 child care centers in barely three years; and then nearly double from 253 to 460 family child care homes - and this is only their historic, core constituency. INCCRRRA has also enrolled nearly 1,100 school-based programs, plus created and implemented enrollment protocols for programs administered and financed by multiple federal and state funding streams. Similarly, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) at National Louis University has employed an ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process to increase the relevance and impact of its training and support activities with both Quality Specialists as well as providers, and continues to provide substantive and thoughtful feedback to inform the State's ongoing implementation of ExceleRate Illinois.

Maintaining Enrollment and Aligning Provisional Programs

Prior to RTT-ELC and the development of ExceleRate Illinois, the State had been administering a quality rating system, Quality Counts, since 2007. Close to 800 programs were enrolled in Quality Counts when ExceleRate Illinois was launched in July 2013. The State worked diligently to provide these programs with a seamless and non-disruptive dual enrollment process from Quality Counts to ExceleRate. These included provisional ratings and reasonable timeframes for programs to align themselves with the expanded and significantly higher standards of ExceleRate Illinois.

A staggered alignment timeframe brought most of these centers and homes from provisional to full ExceleRate Illinois recognition between 2014 and 2016. Fifty-three centers and 27 homes moved up from Silver to Gold; 16 centers and two homes moved from Gold to Silver, with the balance retaining their original rating. It is, however, important to note that "maintenance" was in fact a heavy lift, as ExceleRate standards are significantly higher at every level than those of the previous quality rating system. As a result, these centers and homes in fact, "moved up" in quality, despite the fact that their rating remained the same.

Since 2013, a total of 73 provisionally-enrolled centers (12% of the Quality Counts centers) failed to complete the alignment process with ExceleRate Illinois within the prescribed timelines. These programs are currently inactive, but considered "in recovery," receiving targeted supports and technical assistance to reinstate their quality recognition. Another 74 center-based sites have left the system due to closure, failure to renew licenses, reconstitution with other programs, or changes in ownership. Several were Head Start sites whose grantees/management has changed under the federally-required Designated Renewal System. Their licenses and accreditations are not transferrable from one grantee to the next, and as a result, re-application with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and ExceleRate Illinois is required.

Family Child Care Implementation, and Engagement with ExceleRate Illinois

Under the leadership of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), the State developed ExceleRate Illinois for family child care providers in 2014, launched the new system in 2015, and spent 2016 fine-tuning the process based on feedback, experiences, and data. The State strived to follow the process that was created for centers, as much as possible, in order to minimize confusion and maintain parity between centers and homes. Timelines, deadlines, and grace periods were set to resemble those given to centers.

ExceleRate standards for family child care homes were developed with significantly more rigor than was proposed in Illinois' RTT-ELC original application. In the application, the State proposed making only minor revisions to the criteria in place for the Quality Counts system. However, after closely monitoring the development of ExceleRate standards for centers, the family child care community felt it was important to develop the standards for home-based programs under the framework of "Gold means Gold." Family child care providers felt strongly that the standards reflect similar rigor and quality expectations as the center standards.

Despite the rigorous standards and significant increase from the old QRIS requirements, Illinois' family child care

providers have engaged in ExceleRate Illinois at impressive levels. In 2016, family child care providers who were rated under the old system have worked to meet the alignment criteria by the given deadline and new providers have completed successful applications. In Illinois' RTT-ELC application, the goal was to have 6.7% of the total licensed family child care providers at a level above licensing by the end of 2016. Illinois' data for the end of 2016 shows that an astounding 5.4% of licensed family child care providers have successfully been awarded a circle of quality higher than licensing. This is a remarkable accomplishment given ExceleRate Illinois' high standards for family child care providers. However, as a result of the rigorous expectations, there are fewer family child care programs in the top tiers of ExceleRate Illinois at this stage than was initially projected in the grant application.

There were no significant changes made to the ExceleRate Illinois standards for licensed family child care in 2016. Throughout the year, OECD carefully monitored the progress of family child care providers who engaged in ExceleRate Illinois, with particular attention paid to providers who were found ineligible for the circle of quality for which they applied. If there is a standard that routinely and consistently comes up as a barrier to success, OECD in collaboration with INCCRRA explore whether a revision to the standard is necessary. At this point, the data has not shown any particular standard(s) to be a barrier to achieving a circle of quality.

Family Child Care Support, Professional Development Resources, and Program Alignment Process

Nearly 300 licensed family child care homes were rated and enrolled in Illinois' original quality rating system, Quality Counts, when ExceleRate Illinois for family child care was implemented in 2015. The State worked diligently to provide these programs with a seamless and non-disruptive dual enrollment process from Quality Counts to ExceleRate Illinois, with provisional ratings and a reasonable timeframe for programs to align themselves with the higher standards of ExceleRate Illinois.

Similar to the process for child care centers, Quality Counts 1- and 2-Star programs were dually enrolled in the Silver Circle, and 3- and 4-Star programs were enrolled in the Gold Circle. Family child care dual enrollment took place in June 2015, and family child care providers have done tremendous work to move from a provisional rating to full alignment with their chosen ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality. Currently, 159 family child care programs have aligned at the Silver Circle of Quality and 33 programs have aligned at the Gold Circle of Quality. There are 99 remaining licensed family child care programs that are due to align at the time of this report.

In addition to family child care programs aligning from Quality Counts to ExceleRate Illinois, a surprising number of new providers engaged in the system in 2016 and more applications for all three Circles of Quality are currently pending. There continues to be significant interest in the Bronze Circle of Quality among family child care providers, with related high demand for the trainings that lead to the Bronze Circle of Quality. This is particularly exciting as the Bronze Circle requires an enormous amount of learning that provides lasting, immeasurable benefits to the providers and the families they care for.

OECD values the work of family child care providers and understands the unique challenges they face balancing the needs of their home and small business. Professional development programs and quality supports that are specifically built for family child care providers are critical to the implementation of ExceleRate Illinois, particularly given the rigorous standards for family child care programs in our system. Through RTT-ELC, Illinois has developed and launched an innovative online destination and learning community for family child care professionals. Town Square (www.townsquareIL.org) supports professional learning, connects family child care professionals with other providers, and enhances their knowledge and skills needed for success in meeting the standards of ExceleRate Illinois and the new Family Child Care Credential.

Town Square was developed in collaboration with the Erikson Institute's Department of Distance Learning and Continuing Education and the Herr Research Center. Erikson began work on the portal and online training materials/modules in April 2015. The site officially launched in January 2016, and has helped hundreds of providers successfully strive for and reach quality standards, as well as participate in the credential process.

There is a multitude of resources and professional development tools available on the website. Of particular note, Town Square has developed six learning modules on topics such as technology for family child care,

selecting and managing materials for multi-age learning, selecting culturally relevant and anti-bias materials, and managing environment to effectively communicate and connect with families and community. Town Square has created and posted four webinars that count toward the Family Child Care Credential. The webinars range from child development, to technology as a tool, to organizing and arranging the family child care home environment. This year, Town Square also launched Learn, Share, Grow (LSG), which has been met with overwhelming success and positive feedback. LSG is a series of short video clips that a family child care provider can quickly and easily watch on a particular topic. Currently, there is a four-part series on using technology for business and a four-part series on writing development for each age group.

Town Square is a valuable support for Illinois providers as well as other family child care providers around the country that are looking for resources and materials on quality early learning and best practices in home-based care.

Cross-Agency Communication, Collaboration and Partnerships for System-Building

OECD staff continues to build cross-sector knowledge of our internal team in order to effectively communicate with multiple and diverse audiences, and educate all our state systems and administering agencies about the nuances of one another's program models to promote and advance our common understanding of quality early learning. OECD meets regularly at multiple levels with both leadership and implementation teams at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO), and DCFS. OECD's RTT-ELC staff also participates in the DCFS Licensing Advisory, the Child Care Advisory Council, and the Illinois Early Learning Council.

OECD holds webinars with day care licensing representatives (DCLRs) at DCFS throughout the year to share new or changing information. In 2016, the webinars have provided in-depth information on new resources available to support providers in achieving an ExceleRate Illinois circle of quality with a specific focus on Town Square for family child care providers, updates to credentials and professional development supports, changes to the child care program and anticipated changes to licensing standards as a result of the new CCDF law, and communication about the new key indicator monitoring system. The webinars provide a forum to hear concerns and answer questions among the DCLRs. Providing webinars to DCLRs is an effective strategy for promoting participation, particularly among family child care providers, because DCLRs are an information source for providers and have the most face-to-face contact with providers on a daily basis.

As per the SOW, these webinars are held annually. However, when a significant amount of new information needs to be disseminated, we often utilize webinar capability to efficiently connect with the DCLRs around the state. The last webinar in 2016 was held in September. We are looking forward to holding another one in the coming months. We also anticipate that INCCRRA will continue these webinars post-RTT as they have been found to be particularly effective and efficient. The DCLRs report feeling significantly more connected to the rest of the early childhood system after attending the webinars.

OECD has worked closely with DCFS to promote greater use among DCLRs of the Gateways Registry portal. This portal allows DCLRs to quickly and efficiently review a provider's professional development record and trainings that count toward licensing requirements and/or an ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality, as well as offer encouragement and guidance on next steps to reach the Bronze Circle of Quality. In 2016, OECD and DCFS took another step toward fully integrating Gateways Registry with licensing. With the help of INCCRRA, a Transcript Evaluation Group was formed to create protocols for Gateways Professional Development Record (PDR) to support and document licensing decisions on position qualifications (teacher, director, etc.).

Lastly, OECD convened a Weighted Licensing Consistency workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to create consistency in how licensing violations are weighted across the three facility types (centers, homes, group homes), to ensure parity in licensing enforcement and to allow parents to better understand the significance of licensing violations. The workgroup began the project at the end of 2016 with a goal of completing the review by late spring/early summer 2017. Once there is consistency within the weighted licensing scheme, the

workgroup make recommendations for integration of the weights with ExceleRate Illinois.

Outreach and Communication Strategies for Providers

INCCRRA continues its robust outreach and marketing strategies to engage with and inform multiple stakeholders about ExceleRate Illinois. Their comprehensive marketing plan is implemented with an effective mix of email blasts, newsletter articles, face-to-face networking at conferences, meetings, social media, and strategic partnerships. INCCRRA has developed materials that are suitable for general use as well as for specific audiences, including child care centers, family child care homes, schools, parents, and community partners. Toolkits are available to guide directors through the credential process for their staff, as are parent tip sheets and resources on choosing a quality early learning program. The ExceleRate Illinois website continues to be built out and updated regularly, and on-line search functions are fully operational for child care centers, family child care homes, schools and Head Start programs.

OECD and INCCRRA also work closely with several of the private chains operating early learning programs in Illinois, which collectively account for 205 (7%) of licensed child care centers in the state. These centers represent a significant portion of our early learning programs and ExceleRate enrollment, and they serve many of our low-income children. In addition to regular communication regarding their issues and concerns, we have promoted a “case management” approach to working with them as they enroll in and/or align with ExceleRate. We have engaged their statewide and regional quality improvement staff in training opportunities alongside our CCR&R Quality Specialists, and many are also participating in cohorts providing training and supports for the Awards of Excellence.

Bronze Circle Outreach: First Steps to Quality Improvement

The Bronze Circle of Quality is a robust series of trainings and introductory-level credential requirements. It is designed to lay the groundwork of core knowledge essential for success in ExceleRate Illinois. Fully built-out in 2014 and implemented in 2015, the Bronze Circle (while optional) is an effective entry point for providers new to quality improvement activities. It consists of approximately 50 hours of prescribed content area training for administrators, and 30 hours for classroom teachers. The Bronze Circle trainings for family child care articulate directly into Family Child Care Credential credit. INCCRRA continues to use its robust data warehouses of training participation and credential progress to inform its outreach activities, and counsel programs to completion of the Bronze Circle of Quality. Bronze Circle awards for child care centers have increased seven-fold since 2015 (from 56 to 392), and the Bronze Circle accounts for 30% of family child care homes with a quality rating, with a total of 138 awarded to date.

Accreditation Reciprocity

A key feature of ExceleRate Illinois is its recognition of multiple forms of evidence as pathways to the Silver and Gold Circles of Quality. From 2013-2016, ExceleRate Illinois standards were crosswalked with the standards of six national accrediting bodies: the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC); the American Montessori Society (AMS); the Council on Accreditation Standards for Early Childhood Programs (COA); and AdvancEd for schools. An expedited ExceleRate Illinois enrollment process for all programs accredited by one of these six accrediting bodies was developed and implemented, using the accreditation as proxy for the majority of ExceleRate Illinois standards. The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), which accredits many of the proprietary child care centers, remains in review. NECPA's original application for recognition did not meet the criteria of ExceleRate Illinois; they have since revised their standards, and re-submitted for recognition.

For Family Child Care, accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) is an alternative pathway, and accredited providers can choose to align at the Silver Circle of Quality with a limited amount of additional evidence required for full alignment. NAFCC accredited providers also have the option to align at the Gold Circle of Quality with a larger amount of additional evidence required. In December 2016,

NAFCC reached out to OECD with news of their revised and improved accreditation standards. We have invited them to update their original alignment application. In 2017, we anticipate revising the NAFCC pathway to ExceleRate Illinois upon receipt and review of their updated standards and application.

The result of these efforts is a streamlined process in which multiple standards of evidence demonstrate that a program meets the Silver or Gold Circle of Quality, contributing to a meaningful increase in the number of accredited programs participating in ExceleRate Illinois. It is an efficiency for the accredited programs as well as the State, and is a key element of the sustainability strategy for ExceleRate Illinois. It also enhances the State's ability to identify more seats for at-risk children in high-quality early learning programs in communities throughout Illinois.

Reciprocity with School-Based Preschool for All

The State conducted a crosswalk between the standards of ExceleRate Illinois and the ISBE monitoring protocol for its Preschool for All grantees in 2013. This created an expedited path for school-based Preschool for All programs to enter ExceleRate Illinois with acceptance of administrative compliance and classroom quality assessment gathered in the course of ISBE's triennial monitoring cycle. Consistent with the expectations for Head Start programs, overall compliance with the Preschool for All grant requirements is equivalent to the Gold Circle of Quality in ExceleRate, and the site-based classroom quality monitoring results determine whether the final site rating is the Gold or Silver Circle of Quality. Ratings are re-confirmed and where appropriate, adjusted, consistent with the triennial monitoring cycle. By the end of 2015, 100% of ISBE's school-based Preschool for All programs were enrolled in ExceleRate Illinois.

Preschool for All (PFA) contract requirements meet (and in most cases, exceed) the Gold Circle standards for ExceleRate. ISBE contracts with the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) at National Louis University (NLU) to monitor all PFA programs in the state every three years. MCECL is the same entity contracted by IDHS to assess child care quality; as the same tools are used for each, reciprocity was clearly in order.

ISBE had two full years of school-level PFA monitoring data (representing two-thirds of its baseline of funded programs) available when ExceleRate was launched in 2013. These programs were enrolled in ExceleRate at that time, and the final third of the baseline were enrolled in 2014. More were enrolled in 2015, but these were new schools added with the federal Preschool Development Grant. Concurrently, schools in the first PFA cohort (2011-12) underwent their second round of monitoring in 2014-15 and their ExceleRate ratings were updated to reflect changes in status (if any). The same happened in 2015-16 with updated monitoring results for the 2012-13 cohort of schools.

In summary, PFA is fully established, implemented and updated in the routine triennial protocols of ExceleRate Illinois. Every year, one-third of their programs are monitored for compliance with both Preschool for All and ExceleRate standards and results are updated accordingly.

Collaboration with Community-Based Preschool for All

As with Head Start, Most community-based Preschool for All programs are implemented in licensed child care centers, many of which already have quality ratings through accreditation. Although community-based Preschool for All programs are monitored by ISBE, these monitoring results are limited to the actual funded classrooms at the site. As such, they do not represent the site-level quality rating, inclusive of all classrooms, which is required for enrollment in ExceleRate Illinois. For those that are not accredited, a variety of supports and technical assistance have been implemented by the CCR&R System to enable programs to achieve an ExceleRate Circle of Quality for their site.

Approximately half the Preschool for All (PFA) programs in the City of Chicago, and 17% of those elsewhere in the state, are in community rather than school-based settings. Data from ExceleRate Illinois currently identifies 238 such PFA/Child Care collaborations in licensed child care centers.

Head Start/Early Head Start Collaboration and Reciprocity

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs also have an expedited pathway into ExceleRate Illinois at the Gold or Silver Circles of Quality, created and implemented by OECD in partnership with the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Evidence for thirteen of the fifteen Gold Circle standards are demonstrated with the grantee's federal review monitoring results. The remaining two standards (Learning Environment and Instructional Support) receive site-level verification by the assessment team at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) for Head Start classrooms (grantee choice of assessment tool), and the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) for Early Head Start classrooms. Each site provides supplemental evidence required for selected standards as determined from the crosswalk. These include the number of children with special needs served and verified training hours from Illinois' Gateways to Opportunity Registry. All teaching staff and site administrators apply for Gateways Credentials.

This ExceleRate pathway creates a welcome efficiency for both the Head Start grantee and the State, as it allows the assessment visit to focus only on the gap in evidence. It allows the grantee to provide the remainder of evidence from its existing Head Start compliance documentation, rather than undergo a parallel and often duplicative process. Because the same assessors verify classroom quality in Head Start, school-based Preschool for All, and child care, it also promotes and reinforces the credibility, fairness, and level playing field of our cross-sector system, where "Gold means Gold" in every setting.

This protocol was successfully implemented with 11 Head Start grantees, and a total of 73 stand-alone Head Start/Early Head Start sites in licensed child care centers have been enrolled in ExceleRate Illinois. These are in addition to more than 200 Head Start/Child Care Collaboration Programs which were enrolled in ExceleRate via assessment or accreditation by the end of 2016. The outcome of the Head Start pilot was very favorable, with 74% of programs assessed at the Gold Circle of Quality, and 26% at the Silver Circle. As a result, ExceleRate has approved enrollment with presumptive eligibility at the Silver Circle of Quality for all directly-operated Head Start programs, based entirely on federal monitoring results. This decision meets the needs of Head Start programs to comply with new federal requirements that they participate in the state's QRIS, and will concurrently boost participation in ExceleRate. Head Start programs still have the option to request site-based assessment of classroom quality if they wish to apply for the Gold Circle. With the recent approval of Illinois' application for a No-Cost Extension of RTT-ELC, there are now dedicated resources to assess the many school-based sites operated by Head Start grantees in Illinois, which were previously without a funded, independent assessment mechanism. Significant progress toward achieving the targets for Head Start enrollment in ExceleRate Illinois is expected in 2017.

Awards of Excellence Technical Assistance and Supports

The top level of Illinois' QRIS for center- and school-based programs consists of five Awards of Excellence (AoE). These are: Infant and Toddler Services, Preschool Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement, Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practice, and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs. Following initial content expert meetings during 2013, these same teams reconvened in 2014 to complete the development of high-quality benchmarks and rigorous requirements to achieve the awards. The benchmarks were presented to and approved by the Executive Committee of the Illinois Early Learning Council.

A key implementation strategy of the Awards of Excellence is the provision of targeted supports and technical assistance in each of the domains of practice. An important feature of these supports is the intentional inclusion of programs at all levels of ExceleRate Illinois as a strategy to build and sustain both the appetite and the capacity to improve. Quality improvement is a continuous process, and practice moves incrementally with the development of knowledge and competencies. While only Gold-rated programs may *apply* for an Award of Excellence, technical assistance and supports are available to *all* programs in order to inform and advance practice. This strategy has created robust cross-sector communities of practice around the state, which in turn has led to new relationships and opportunities for mentorship and collaboration at all levels of the system.

Funds were budgeted in the RTT-ELC Grant to support programs pursuing the awards in all five content areas.

Technical assistance providers were selected through a Request For Proposals (RFP) process and contracted to provide these supports around the state. This work began in the fall of 2014, and was fully operational for all practice domains in 2015. An additional portion of funds was set aside to provide additional supports to improve preschool instruction in all early learning settings through the *Lead Learn Excel* model. These technical assistance activities are focused on developing effective instructional leaders, to equip them with the knowledge and skills to guide and support teachers in classroom implementation.

Outreach for participants was conducted throughout the state, and cohorts preparing for awards in all five content areas were fully operational in 2015, with nearly 600 instructional leaders engaged in supports across the five content areas through 2016. All sectors (licensed child care, Preschool for All and Head Start) in both school- and community-based settings are represented in the cohorts. Many multiple-site agencies and several school districts engaged in quality supports as stand-alone cohorts. In addition to the content-specific support cohorts, some programs chose to apply for Awards of Excellence via an independent path. The technical assistance contractors provide webinars, self-assessment tools, training recommendations and other resources to guide practitioners through the independent route.

Application and review processes for the Awards of Excellence were developed in fall 2014. Two application cycles were implemented in 2015, and four were implemented in 2016. The process begins with a preliminary application and verification of selected pre-requisite standards, which include threshold scores on assessment tools, training requirements and staff qualifications. If pre-requisites are met, applicants are invited to submit a full application and electronic program portfolio for review by a statewide advisory panel of content area experts. Review panelists for each Award of Excellence were recruited, with the assistance of the ELC. Outreach focused on identifying candidates for the review panels with an emphasis on the recruitment of younger, mid-career leaders and other rising stars. This strategy was intended as an opportunity for professional development with exposure to statewide systems, while raising new leaders to create a bench of knowledgeable and experienced professionals to carry on and move forward with our state's work. The response to this opportunity was both overwhelming and gratifying, as more than 500 panelists and facilitators were required to meet the demand for portfolio reviews.

By the end of 2016, 178 programs submitted pre-applications for Awards of Excellence in the six application cycles, with 126 completing the portfolio review process. A total of 84 Awards of Excellence were achieved - 21 for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, 26 for Family and Community Engagement, 11 for Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practice, 21 for Preschool Teaching and Learning, and 5 for Infant and Toddler Services.

Thirty-six of the 84 Awards were achieved by child care centers, and 48 by school-based programs. Of note, this distribution represents approximately 6% of the Gold Circle programs in each setting. We believe this serves as secondary validation of the equity of the system, and the consistency of the cross-sector standards and reciprocity protocols. Not surprisingly, many of the awardees were also engaged in Head Start collaboration at some level. This in turn is further confirmation that funding REALLY matters, and adequate funding is essential to program capacity to implement and sustain program quality at scale.

The Awards of Excellence subcontractors in all content areas have been relentless in their mission of advancing practice for its own good purpose, rather than churning out awards. Programs have welcomed the inclusivity of this approach, and remain engaged and determined in their pursuit of improving practice, whether or not they apply for an award. All AoE subcontractors have created "below Gold" templates to introduce content-area progress and development from a strengths-based position. This has created a wealth of diverse and highly-differentiated portfolio offerings which meet their audiences wherever they are and move them forward. This enables programs to engage and improve in incremental but meaningful ways along a continuum of practice.

Formal supports for the Awards of Excellence are wrapping up during the RTT-ELC No-Cost Extension. All resources developed by the subcontractors will remain publicly-available via links from the ExceleRate website, and from the subcontractors' own websites. OECD and subcontractors continue to document these accomplishments, and advance plans for sustainability of this innovative RTT-ELC project.

Screening and Referral Resources for Capacity-Building

Among the higher expectations embedded in ExceleRate Illinois are screening, evaluation and service referral protocols for all children from birth through kindergarten entry. All providers at the Silver and Gold Circles of Quality are required to develop and implement policies and procedures, which ensure that all children served receive developmental screening at least annually. Additional training and other protocols must be implemented for the Gold Circle, among them the requirement of a formal written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the program and the local Early Intervention provider and/or the Local Education Agency. These standards are a key strategy to promote kindergarten readiness and school success in the State, especially among the highest-need children. In recognition of a gap in knowledge and experience with these systems on the part of some early learning providers, the Special Education Sub-Committee of the Illinois Early Learning Council created resources to assist providers in meeting these expectations and successfully implementing the protocols with competence. In consultation with ISBE and IDHS, they developed a standard Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) template for statewide use. The template includes step-by-step instructions, along with a robust inventory of screening and training resources. During 2015-2016, its use was piloted with providers in three Innovation Zones whose strategic priorities focus on universal screening and access to enhanced services. Learnings from these initiatives have been disseminated to programs throughout the state. Permanent trainings resources and webinars are in development during the No-Cost Extension, and will be accessible to all providers through INCCRRA and the ExceleRate website.

Curriculum Alignment

ExceleRate Illinois standards for Teaching and Learning require that programs implement a research-based curriculum which is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (IELGs) for birth - age three, and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) for ages three to five. In order to help programs meet this standard, OECD created a crosswalk process to review various curricula for their alignment with the IELGs and IELDS. Practitioners and Quality Specialists were surveyed about their curriculum choices, outreach was conducted with publishers/authors of curricula in widespread use, and providers encouraged their other publishers to undergo the review. Publishers submit an application, which includes a narrative describing its research base and training capacity in Illinois, along with a full set of curriculum materials and standard-by-standard written evidence of its alignment with the IELGs and IELDS. State agency content experts, designated by the Interagency Team, review applications and curricula three times per year. To date, 38 curricula have been reviewed, determined aligned and accepted for the ExceleRate Illinois curriculum standard. Three of these also meet the family child care curriculum standard. Nine are proprietary curricula implemented by private chains/franchises, which are only available for their use. OECD also developed a simplified rubric for evidence of alignment for those practitioners who choose to implement their own self-designed curriculum. Several additional curricula for both center-based and family child care are in process for a spring 2017 review.

License-Exempt Provider Pathway

In order to ensure the statewide QRIS is accessible to all early childhood programs that serve children in groups, policy was developed in 2014 for license-exempt centers, a category which includes most programs in public or private schools and a limited number of other exemptions. The standards for ExceleRate Illinois were developed with the understanding that basic health and safety issues were assessed and ensured through the DCFS Day Care Licensing process. However, as a multi-sector Quality Rating and Improvement System, ExceleRate Illinois applies to preschool programs, including the state's Preschool for All (PFA) programs, which are usually housed in public school buildings. These programs are legally exempt from Day Care Licensing by Illinois statute but are held accountable for other health and safety standards applicable to public school buildings by ISBE and local school districts.

The ExceleRate Illinois policy specifies the conditions under which other legally license-exempt programs may participate in ExceleRate Illinois. The policy aims to ensure that such programs have demonstrated in some meaningful way that they do indeed provide a safe and healthy environment for young children. In particular,

programs must demonstrate that their facilities are safe, that appropriate staff-to-child ratios are met, and that the program has obtained adequate background checks on all staff. Several school-based non-PFA programs inquired about the license-exempt application process in 2015, and one accredited Montessori School completed it. However, significant changes under the new Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) authorization suggest that the license-exempt pathway may require substantive revision for compliance. Accordingly, the license-exempt pathway is suspended while the new State CCDF Plan launches, and we await further implementation guidance from federal administrators.

Technology in Support of Directors and ExceleRate Illinois

The Gateways Registry Director Portal features online access to tools that help early learning program administrators manage their programs. Access to the portal is restricted and must be requested by the director. Initially, the online tools were meant to help directors monitor compliance with licensing regulations, including staff membership in the Gateways Registry and completion of 15 training hours per year. With ExceleRate Illinois bringing additional emphasis to Gateways Credentials, the State implemented a policy change that allows directors access to additional staff information in order to monitor progress toward credentials. A new report was created to enable directors to view individual staff educational qualifications, application and progress toward credentials, and award of credentials. This helps directors monitor their programs' compliance with ExceleRate Illinois standards related to teacher qualifications and credentials. In 2016, the Director portal has nearly 2,000 users, and is currently utilized by nearly half of all licensed centers in Illinois.

Technology in Support of Training

The Gateways i-learning system includes a full menu of training available to meet ExceleRate Illinois requirements for directors and teachers. As a complement to classroom trainings designed through RTT-ELC funds, all i-learning content is aligned with the face-to-face versions and objectives in order to meet Gateways Registry approval requirements. The i-learning system provides 15 online trainings that meet ExceleRate Illinois standards and requirements, which 25,126 participants have completed. In 2016, there were a total of 95,458 training completions on 42 i-learning online training topics by 28,918 individuals (unduplicated count). This represents nearly half the number of active Registry members working in an early care and education setting.

Flexibility as a Key Strategy for Provider Engagement

The State has been nimble and flexible in its general policy-making in order to enable providers from all sectors to align with and achieve an ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality. For example, Gateways Credentials are embedded throughout the standards of ExceleRate Illinois, which in turn build our statewide system, and provide data (rather than anecdotes) to inform us of legitimate barriers and professional development needs. This enables our state systems to target supports and technical assistance, and provide supplemental resources and counseling. These efforts have greatly reduced anxiety among providers and generated positive feedback. The State is pleased to report that, to date, all but five programs in Illinois have been able to meet the credential benchmarks set forth by ExceleRate.

Innovation Zones and Promising Practice Initiatives for Quality Improvement

One of Illinois' key projects within the RTT-ELC grant is the Innovation Zone initiative. In each of these geographically based Innovation Zones, early learning and development programs are working collaboratively to plan for and implement local cross-system strategies to increase the enrollment of high-need children in quality early learning programs and/or to increase the quality of early learning programs in their community. In Year One (2013), the State launched seven zones:

- Aurora (small city (urban/suburban) in northern part of state)
- Greater East St. Louis (south central urban/suburban)
- Cicero (densely populated suburb of Chicago)
- Thornton Township (south suburbs of Chicago)
- North Lawndale (neighborhood in City of Chicago)

- Williamson County (southern Illinois, largely rural)
- Pilsen/Little Village (City of Chicago neighborhood)

Based on early successes within this initiative and with the availability of additional resources, the State invited community applications for participation in a second cohort of Innovation Zones in 2015. The areas selected in 2015 were:

- Altgeld-Riverdale (City of Chicago housing project and immediate neighborhood)
- Austin (neighborhood in the City of Chicago)
- Southside cluster (three neighborhoods in the City of Chicago)
- Elgin (small city in northern part of state)

Each of the 11 communities was selected based on demonstrated need as well as capacity to plan for and implement cross-system strategies. Innovation Zone teams in each community receive support in the form of technical assistance, coaching, training, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

At the end of 2016, Illinois as a whole had 44% of its child care centers enrolled above the Licensing level (Tier 1) of ExceleRate Illinois, with 18% at or above the Gold Circle of Quality. The State's overall RTT-ELC targets on these measures are 50% above Licensing and 25% Gold, respectively. As a result of diligent and intentional collaborative work, several Innovation Zones have successfully tested models for supporting local programs in increasing their quality.

As a result of the diligent and intentional work of the Greater East St. Louis (GESTL) Innovation Zone, its performance on these targets exceeds the statewide goal with 91% of its licensed child care centers above Licensing, and 27% at the Gold Circle of Quality --exceeding both the statewide average and the State's target. The GESTL IZ also requested and was granted adjustments in some requirements in order to achieve larger and more important goals for children in the community. As an example, their Bronze training cohort parlayed the required developmental screening session into an extended day, during which all their providers were fully trained on the Ages & Stages (ASQ) screening tool. They can now implement their own developmental screenings in their centers, rather than refer children out for screenings. This cohort also conceived a plan to bundle the Bronze trainings into Gateways Credential content areas, enabling them to receive the maximum credential points possible for their investment in the trainings. This plan was successfully piloted with INCCRRA and the GESTL Innovation Zone, and is now available to all programs statewide.

The GESTL partners have also worked together to increase Gateways Registry memberships; provide cross-sector professional development and leadership training opportunities in the community; create intake and enrollment systems that support data collection; assist programs and practitioners with scholarship and grant applications; align program policies and procedures with ExceleRate requirements and the administration of Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ-3); and organize a monthly community of practice where program directors and emerging leaders are given the opportunity to share information, ask questions, and learn about supports that can help their program and staff attain ExceleRate benchmarks.

In Aurora, partners focused on developing leadership training and mentoring, establishing a community of practice, and creating ExceleRate cohorts to support, develop, and strengthen the leadership skills of center directors and their leadership teams. Aurora also launched *Focus on the First 5 Years*, a symposia designed to help individuals better understand early learning policies, practices and initiatives, and to bring service providers together. A partnership with STARnet, the state's resource network for providers serving children with special needs age three and older and their families, enabled early childhood professionals to access additional training.

The Austin Innovation Zone convened a Directors' Roundtable that reached 14 child care owners or administrators. This group collectively decided to focus on quality improvement through mutual support,

shared resources and professional development. The Austin Innovation Zone network includes numerous partners (community agencies and Institutions of Higher Education) that have agreed to provide technical assistance, professional development, and coaching at no cost to Directors' Roundtable members. This commitment to quality improvement in early learning programs will ensure that more children will enter kindergarten ready to learn.

In the South Suburban Innovation Zone, the priority remains mentoring child care centers that are going through the ExceleRate Illinois process and training Community of Practice participants. In 2016, child care centers and school district were connected to quality coaches and other resources available through the CCR&R. The Innovation Zone conducted an information session for newly recruited child care centers to learn more about the ExceleRate Illinois process, quality accreditation and the readiness questionnaire, and hosted a data training for Community of Practice members.

In Williamson County, the county-wide Early Childhood Teacher Institute, promotion and support of teachers earning credentials, and the development of a shared services technology infrastructure to coordinate and integrate professional development opportunities/ collaboration across systems resulted in an increase in the number of childcare centers participating in ExceleRate. The Early Childhood Teacher Institute drew 121 professionals from preschool programs, child care and Head Start. The Institute provided consistent messaging and content to a cross-sector audience and built a stronger, more cohesive early childhood workforce. Testing a possible exception to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) policy, child care programs were able to close for the day so that staff could attend the Institute during the regular work week. The participating programs were able to charge for CCAP as long as private pay parents were also charged. Parents received ample notice to make alternate arrangements, they understood the impact that well trained staff would have on their child, and they were very supportive and invested in the quality of their child's program.

Regional Continuous Quality Improvement Work Groups

Illinois continued and expanded upon its successful model of regional continuous quality improvement (CQI) work groups. In addition to the local meetings that occur regularly around the state, two large statewide gatherings were conducted in 2016 to bring all the regional work groups together. Through the life of the grant, OECD has hosted eight such gatherings, with close to 1,300 participants in attendance. These were supplemented with two statewide webinar trainings on Judy Jablon's "Powerful Interactions" with more than 500 attendees. These gatherings provide opportunities for providers to learn from one another and share promising strategies and practices, in addition to building relationships across the sectors in the early childhood system.

City of Chicago Quality Team

Programs in the City of Chicago remain highly engaged in ExceleRate Illinois in 2016. With support from a private foundation and the Mayor's Office, a dedicated team worked to shepherd all of the city's delegate agencies and community partners to an ExceleRate rating, with strong emphasis on achieving the Gold Circle. This work was led by the local CCR&R, Illinois Action for Children (IAFC), in collaboration with key leadership of the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The team had dedicated Quality Specialists at IAFC, and embedded in both DFSS and CPS. All of the Head Start and Early Head Start programs funded by DFSS, and all of the Prevention Initiative and Preschool for All programs funded by CPS, engage in coordinated quality improvement activities which include *Lead Learn Excel* and other Awards of Excellence supports. Many licensed child care centers, engaged in formal partnerships with city delegate agencies, are also working to achieve an ExceleRate Circle of Quality. Teachers and administrators participate in cohorts focused on completion of specific training modules and progressing with credential achievement. Although the City Quality Team wrapped up its formal workplan in June 2016, the routines and collaboration operationalized over the past four years created a sustainable structure to continue this important work.



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Performance Measure (B)(2)(c)

In the table, provide data on the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that are participating in the State's TQRIS by type of Early Learning and Development Program. Targets must be consistent with those in the State's application unless a change has been approved.

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide TQRIS.										
Targets: Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS										
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool	0	0%	600	50%	1,200	100%	1,200	100%	1,200	100%
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹	25	3%	360	50%	720	100%	720	100%	720	100%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C										
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619										
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA										
Programs receiving CCDF funds	507	17%	2,967	100%	2,967	100%	2,967	100%	2,967	100%
Other 1	259	3%	9,857	100%	9,857	100%	9,857	100%	9,857	100%
<i>Describe:</i>	Homes receiving from CCDF funds									
Other 2										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 3										
<i>Describe:</i>										

¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c) - Additional Other rows

Targets: Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Other 4										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 5										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 6										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 7										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 8										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 9										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 10										
<i>Describe:</i>										

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide TQRIS.

Actuals: Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Baseline			Year One			Year Two			Year Three			Year Four		
	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%
State-funded preschool	1,400	0	0%	1,200	486	40.5%	1,283	1,195	93.1%	1,250	1,250	100%	1,250	1,250	100%
<i>Specify:</i>															
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹	720	25	3%	600	73	12.16%	600	263	43.8%	600	376	62.7%	600	439	73%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C															
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619															
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA															
Programs receiving CCDF funds	2,967	507	17%	2,941	2,941	100%	2,923	2,923	100%	2,981	2,981	100%	2,982	2,982	100%
Other 1	9,857	259	3%	9,271	294	3.71%	9,026	9,026	100%	8,759	8,759	100%	8,387	8,387	100%
<i>Describe:</i>	Homes receiving from CCDF funds														
Other 2															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 3															
<i>Describe:</i>															

¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c) - Additional Other rows

Actuals: Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Baseline			Year One			Year Two			Year Three			Year Four		
	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%	# of programs in the State	#	%
Other 4															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 5															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 6															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 7															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 8															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 9															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 10															
<i>Describe:</i>															

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c) Data Notes

Indicate if baseline data are actual or estimated; describe the methodology used to collect the data, including any error or data quality information; and please include any definitions you used that are not defined in the notice.

Baseline numbers of programs were estimated, as were the total numbers of programs in the State by type for Head Start/Early Head Start. Data systems should allow for an exact, unduplicated count of Head Start/Early Start programs in 2017, three years later than originally planned. Total number of State-funded Preschool for All programs, child care centers, and family child care homes are actual numbers.

Year One numbers for Preschool for All and Head Start/Early Head Start included only programs with completed ratings in the Silver or Gold Circle, as do Years Two, Three and Four actual numbers for Head Start/Early Head Start. Years Two, Three and Four numbers for Preschool for All include all numbers. Once fully-implemented, the State's new data systems will allow the reporting of actual numbers across all Circles of Quality for all types of programs.

All IDEA Part C services in Illinois are provided on a fee-for-service, individual basis. There are no classroom-based programs funded by the State to provide Part C services and therefore there are no programs that would be appropriate to include in the QRIS. The IDEA Part B classrooms that participate in the QRIS are included in the Preschool for All count above, as they are blended classrooms providing an inclusive "least restrictive environment" for children with special needs. Title I funds are used to expand Preschool for All in the Chicago Public Schools and in other LEAs throughout the State, and therefore these programs are counted in the Preschool for All count above.

"Programs receiving CCDF funds" represents only child care centers licensed to serve children under kindergarten age as of December 31, 2016. Licensed family child care homes receiving CCDF funds are listed in the row below. These data include all licensed centers and family child care homes that serve children ages five and under, not only those receiving Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funds. Centers and homes that are legally exempt from licensure are not included. Center number also includes programs that only provide part-day services, which were not eligible for Quality Counts, but are included in ExceleRate Illinois.

Performance Measure (B)(2)(c) Target Notes

For all targets that were not reached in the reporting year, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in reaching the established grant targets by the end of the grant period.

Illinois met its Performance Measure target of 100% of licensed programs and State-funded preschool enrolled in the QRIS. All licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes are included in at least Tier 1 of ExceleRate Illinois, and all State-funded preschool programs have been through at least one monitoring cycle and are now enrolled.

For Head Start and Early Head Start, the State did not meet its target of 100% enrollment in 2016. Illinois met 73% of its Performance Measure Target with 439 of the estimated 600 programs enrolled. This represents continued annual progress toward the target, with another 17% increase in Head Start enrollment from 2015 to 2016, from 376 to 439 programs.

This is primarily due to the fact that Illinois' requirement of site-level classroom assessment for ExceleRate Illinois enrollment remains a barrier for Head Start programs, whose classroom assessment data are reported at the program/grantee level, and whose assessment protocol is not fully-aligned with that of ExceleRate. 288 of the Head Start programs enrolled are licensed child care centers operating in community-based sites. 215 of these are Head Start/Child Care collaboration sites, and 73 are stand-alone Head Start sites. An additional 151 school-based sites operated by CPS are enrolled, as CPS can provide the State with independent monitoring data at the site/classroom level.

As described at length in Sections (B)(1) and (B)(2) of this report, the State developed policy and protocols for an expedited path for Head Start enrollment in ExceleRate Illinois. This approach was successfully implemented in 2014 through 2016 with 11 grantees at the 73 stand-alone sites noted above. It was made available to all Head Start grantees in 2016 as a key strategy to meet the QRIS enrollment targets. Based on the outcome of the Head Start Pilot, the State approved universal Head Start enrollment with presumptive eligibility at the Silver Circle in 2016. Enrollment processes and protocols have been implemented, and were launched in February 2017 with Head Start grantees. It is anticipated that this initiative will enable Illinois to achieve its full Head Start enrollment target in 2017.

Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs (Section B(3) of Application).

The State has made progress in developing and enhancing a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs that participate in the TQRIS that (please check all that apply):

- Includes information on valid and reliable tools for monitoring such programs
- Has trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability
- Monitors and rates Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency
- Provides 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)
- Makes 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.

Describe progress made during the reporting year in developing and enhancing a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs that participate in the TQRIS. Describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs by the end of the grant period.

The State continues to implement rigorous assessment processes for all of its early learning and development programs. These processes were established with Illinois' previous quality rating system, Quality Counts, through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and with the Preschool for All monitoring protocol through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Both IDHS and ISBE contract with the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) at National Louis University for this purpose, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) has expanded the scope of this work through RTT-ELC in order to support the increased volume of assessments required for ExceleRate Illinois.

MCECL's assessment tools include the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) for Infants and Toddlers, Early Childhood, School Age, and Family Child Care; the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS); the Program Administration Scale (PAS); and the Business Administration Scale (BAS). The assessment contracts require reliability of at least 85% on all these instruments, and the contractor conducts reliability checks every 6-10 assessments. Assessors from MCECL continued to provide full ERS and PAS/BAS assessments for child care centers and family child care homes seeking the Gold Circle of ExceleRate Illinois in 2016. The McCormick Center continues to implement the Preschool for All Monitoring Protocol (which includes ERS) for ISBE schools and centers outside the City of Chicago. They provided CLASS and/or ERS assessments for sites participating in the expedited Head Start pathway (described earlier in this narrative). This work expanded in 2015 and 2016 as more Head Start grantees engaged with ExceleRate Illinois. The opportunity to re-allocate funds with the 2017 No-Cost Extension have allowed us to extend assessment resources to school-based Head Start sites, which previously had no such mechanism to collect site-level data consistent with the requirements of ExceleRate Illinois. The McCormick Center also provides both ERS and CLASS assessments across all settings for selected Awards of Excellence, where some standards require confirming scores.

Assessments for child care centers seeking the Silver Circle of ExceleRate Illinois were conducted by Quality Specialists through the State's regional Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies through October 2015. This protocol was changed in November 2015 as a result of findings from the State's own system continuous quality improvement (CQI) process. This review identified challenges due to turnover in the ranks of Quality Specialists, and related challenges in balancing their on-the-ground responsibilities for recruitment, consultation, technical support and guidance, and conducting reliable assessments. The Silver Circle protocol is now a hybrid process, with MCECL assessors performing the ERS assessments, and the Quality Specialists

verifying the other standards. The Quality Specialists have all undergone rigorous training on both the ERS and the PAS, and are able to use that knowledge in their consultative and technical assistance roles with providers. Because the Silver Circle is strongly focused on rigorous self-assessment and continuous quality improvement (CQI), Quality Specialists are also trained on CQI and protocols for monitoring. Quality Specialists receive robust and ongoing professional development, training, support and consultation from MCECL through regular regional meetings and telephone support. This ensures that providers receive accurate guidance and feedback to support them in implementing program improvements to achieve the Silver Circle. As demonstrated in the 2016 Performance Measures, this new division of labor has enhanced program recruitment and engagement efforts in local communities. It has also enabled the Quality Specialists to better support the quality improvement efforts of new providers, in addition to those seeking to achieve higher levels of recognition in ExceleRate Illinois.

The state is in the process of transitioning from the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) to the new ECERS-Third Edition assessment tool. Illinois' entire technical assistance and coaching system has been trained in the new tool, as has the entire MCECL assessment team. State Anchors are in place throughout the professional development system; Trainings of Trainers (TOTs) are underway; and provider training is scheduled for the spring of 2017. The new tool will be fully implemented with all ExceleRate programs as of July 1, 2017.

Head Start and Preschool for All programs are required to submit independent evidence of their classroom quality for enrollment in ExceleRate Illinois, and have both an ERS and a CLASS option to assess classroom quality. With the exception of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), all Preschool for All programs use the ERS and are monitored under ISBE's contract with MCECL. All Head Start programs in the state, as well as all Preschool for All classrooms in CPS use the CLASS tool. To ensure consistency across multiple settings in the State's systems, threshold classroom quality scores required for both the Gold and Silver Circles are aligned across child care centers, Preschool for All, and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Site-level classroom quality scores for Head Start/Early Head Start programs are required to be provided by independent assessors (not employees of the program being assessed) properly certified by the protocol required for the tool.

Crosswalks were performed with both the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Preschool for All Program Monitoring Protocol, in order to ensure that the evidence required to achieve the Gold Circle was as rigorous as that required of child care programs. Head Start and Preschool for All programs operating in compliance with their grants are expected to meet all standards at the Gold Circle of Quality. Those whose classroom scores fail to meet the required threshold for Gold are assigned to the Silver Circle and implement a quality improvement plan.

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) monitor most Head Start/Early Head Start programs, and all Preschool for All programs in the City of Chicago for classroom quality and administrative compliance. The Chicago Quality Team, led by Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) with key administrators from DFSS and CPS, coordinates and implements large scale program improvement plans across all settings in the City of Chicago, with dedicated Quality Specialists embedded in the public agencies and at IAFC. This team worked closely with OECD from 2013-2016 to streamline and integrate monitoring processes to reduce the burden on programs, to ensure support for CQI, and to implement an efficient process for generating classroom scores and other program data required for ExceleRate.

To manage the large volume of programs in the universal QRIS, the State also recognizes the independent verification of quality through accreditation wherever possible. As discussed elsewhere in this narrative, the State has conducted rigorous crosswalks with six national accrediting bodies and granted them reciprocity with ExceleRate Illinois on a variety of standards. The use of accreditation to furnish evidence for substantial portions of ExceleRate Illinois standards creates an efficient system that will allow the State to redirect system resources and provide a strong foundation to sustain the QRIS in the future.

Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs (Section B(4) of Application).

Has the State made progress in improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs that are participating in your State TQRIS through the following policies and practices? (If yes, please check all that apply.)

- Program and provider training
- Program and provider technical assistance
- Financial rewards or incentives
- Higher, tiered child care subsidy reimbursement rates
- Increased compensation

Describe the progress made in improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs that are participating in your State TQRIS during the reporting year. Please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the grant period.

Illinois continues to make significant progress in increasing the number of identified programs with high-quality seats throughout the state, and in increasing the access and opportunities for enrollment for high-priority populations in such programs. One notable outcome of this work is the increased enrollment of children in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) enrolled in our highest rated (Gold) centers and licensed homes, which has moved from 13% of total caseload in Year 1 to nearly 30% in Year Four. Another is the shift in outreach and enrollment protocols and priorities, as well as program models, being embedded in the upcoming re-competition of preschool funded by the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG).

While the State is pleased with its progress towards increasing the percentage of children with high needs in high quality programs receiving CCAP funding, it is important to note that there has been a significant reduction in the overall number of children in CCAP. As shown in Table B(4)(c)(2), the number of children with high needs participating in programs receiving Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF), has decreased from the baseline of 115,188 in 2012 to 71,912 in 2016, a reduction of 37.5%. It is, however, reassuring to see that the absolute number of children cared for in Gold-rated child care programs has increased by more than 6,100 and that the State has retained capacity in high quality programs for children with high needs.

One of Illinois' key initiatives for increasing enrollment of priority populations in high quality programs is a community systems approach, focused on three prongs:

1. Testing local strategic approaches in Innovation Zone communities with high needs and integrating those learnings into the broader state system;
2. Building capacity of local communities to effectively reach and enroll families with high needs, and ;
3. Strengthening the state infrastructure to support cross-sector community systems building.

Innovation Zones and Promising Practice Initiatives for Identifying and Enrolling Families with High Needs

As described in Section B(2), Illinois has 11 geographically based Innovation Zones (IZ), in which programs are working collaboratively to plan for and implement local cross-system strategies towards the goal of enrolling children with highest needs in a continuum of high quality early learning and development programs. All of the Innovation Zones have focused on one or more strategies identified in their local community to increase the enrollment of children with high needs in quality early learning programs, with highlights summarized below.

In Altgeld-Riverdale IZ, partners implemented several new strategies that focused on seamless transitions to ensure that children have access to high quality early learning programs. As a result of these efforts, 5 of their 6 preschool programs are at least 80 percent enrolled (to date, two of these programs are at 100 percent). These strategies include: partnering with an innovative preschool-to-kindergarten transition program (Ready Freddy)

in which preschool and kindergarten teachers from the area's schools and centers collaborate monthly to build a seamless transition and educating preschool enrollment staff on the rights of homeless children and families in the education system. This IZ celebrated the first day of preschool to energize the community, resulting in full attendance on the first day of classes - which in past years typically took several weeks to reach.

The Aurora Innovation Zone's shared intake initiative resulted in over 250 completed intakes with families, reaching 335 children birth to age five and referring them to EC services and programs. A family recently arriving from Afghanistan said, *"I learned about SPARK from the staff at World Relief. The SPARK Family Resource Specialist met with me and shared the programs that my children can enroll in. She helped enroll my daughter into Todd Early Learning Center and she has been helpful in helping me understand the program. My hope for my children is that they can go to school to learn to speak English by talking to other children and also for them to make friends. My daughter has been able to do this at Todd Early Learning Center."* Discussion at a community meeting with members of the pilot agencies (a homeless shelter, a refugee support agency, and a food pantry) who were part of the shared intake initiative reflected *"how the project has positively impacted their programs and service to their families. It validated our goal as a collaboration in our goal of leveraging our agencies and resources to families and their children; coordinating for greater impact; and building capacity and efficiency."*

In Austin, parent leaders were crucial in facilitating outreach, enrollment, and attendance of priority population children in early learning and development programs. A Parent Ambassador team engaged families through weekly parent support groups and supported enrollment by referring interested parents to a coordinated intake system. The Austin Innovation Zone increased cross-system, coordinated referrals and intake systems between the early childhood system, health care system and social service agencies through the establishment of a referral pipeline.

In Cicero and the Chicago neighborhoods of Pilsen-Little Village (P-LV), the Innovation Zones focused on engaging Latino immigrant families in early learning, through outreach conducted by trained Parent (and Grandparent) Ambassadors (13 in Cicero, 9 in P-LV). In response to feedback from families who were unfamiliar with early learning and hesitant to enroll their children, Cicero also partnered with faith-based organizations and community centers to create the *Primeros Pasos* pop-up preschools that reached more than 250 families since 2014. Said some of the pop-up preschool parents:

"Quiero agradecer a la Escuelita Movil, Primeros Pasos. Por las clases a mi hijo, son de mucha ayuda, note avances importantes en el desarrollo de mi hijo. Ahora es mas sociable, interactia mejor con otros niños, y aprendio muchas cosas, como a usar correctamente las tijeras, realice muchas actividades manuales que ayudaran a su desarrollo cognitiv. Les pido a las personas responsables de este tipo de programas que sigan realizando mas proyectos son de mucha ayuda a nuestros niños." ("I want to thank the Primeros Pasos [Pop-up Preschool]. The classes were very helpful for my son, and there were breakthroughs in his development. Now he is more sociable, interacts better with other children, and has learned many things, like how to use scissors correctly, and many hands-on activities that help with his cognitive development. I ask the organizers of these programs to continue to do more projects like this, which are very helpful to our children.")

Cicero's Parent Ambassadors went door-to-door to targeted quadrants of the city (based on demographic mapping) and conducted outreach through businesses and community events. In addition to these strategies, P-LV had particular success in partnering with the Chicago Archdiocese, a local health clinic, and in stationing Parent Ambassadors to talk with families in the waiting area of the Mexican Consulate. In 2016, Cicero reported over 1,000 children from priority populations enrolled in high quality early learning, and P-LV reported over 1,200 enrolled. The Parent Ambassadors found the experience very rewarding, as shown in the following quotes from P-LV:

- *"We plant in our kids the seed of the college dream since they are born, and by providing our kids with early childhood education opportunities, so the question that we need to ask and plant in our kids' minds is, "Where are you going to college? And what would you like to become?"*
- *"[My participation] helped me recognize that my knowledge and experiences are important, and that I can expand my "indigenous" foundation of knowledge by accessing quality information, and by sharing this information with my own kids and with parents in my community. Now, I have clarity about how*

stereotypes impact our children's education, the Latino education system history of United States and how difficult it was for Latinos and minority populations to have access to quality education. I understand how to apply to college, and I developed a deeper appreciation for the challenges that our students are going through."

The P-LV Innovation Zone also conducted a successful workshop with 16 grandmothers in Little Village called "Mi hijo a trabajar y mi nieto al preescolar" (my child goes to work and my grandchild goes to preschool). Fifteen of the grandmothers were from Mexico (representing 12 Mexican states) and one was from Guatemala. The workshop included an activity in which the grandmothers shared advice to help their grandchildren be successful in life. These words of wisdom were collected in a "treasure chest" and read aloud. Some examples are below:

- *"Mi niño, mi tesoro, te aconsejo para tu bien y para tu vida social que nunca faltes a la escuela, desde el primer día hasta el final, para que te sientas siempre completo" (My child, my treasure, I advise for your own good and for your social life that you never miss school, from the first day to the end, so that you always feel complete)*
- *"Estudiar es la mejor herencia que les puede dejar a los hijos y motivar a los nietos" (Studying is the best inheritance that we can leave to our children and motivate our grandchildren)*
- *"Nunca dejen para después los estudios, piensen en su porvenir" (Never stop studying,, think about your future).*
- *"Si no hay escuela, no hay trabajo" (If there is no school, there is no work)*

In the city of Elgin, Innovation Zone resources helped launch a community-wide referral, outreach, and enrollment campaign in partnership with the countywide All Our Kids (AOK) Network, MIECHV collaboration (Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting), school district, public housing development, and hospital. Their vision was to create a centralized information and referral point for all partners serving high need children: Elgin created a website for parents and providers, as well as a toll-free referral "warm line." Professionals trained in family-focused intake staff the warm-line, and collaboration partners follow up with families to ensure referrals connect to service. Through the local birthing hospital, new parents also receive information packets with the warm-line number included.

Elgin's "Preschool in the Park" initiative was also very successful: over the course of the summer, Parent Ambassadors knocked on 417 doors, and 107 children under the age of five attended the preschools. Each time a child was found who was not enrolled in a program, they were immediately connected to a partner who could help. One of the Parent Ambassadors said about the experience: *"It was a satisfying experience for me. People are without information. A lot of them are home because they didn't know where to go or where to get information. It works well when someone tells their own experience with programs. We need to form relationships."*

In the Englewood area of Chicago, the Southside Early Learning Network focused on transitions from home visiting to high quality early learning, and expanding their MIECHV home visiting coordinated intake and referral process to include early learning. They have referral partnerships with 51 organizations, including shelters, hospitals, schools, and other social service agencies. In response to parent questions about special needs and early intervention, this community also developed a pilot to train and deploy five parent Peer Advocates to inform families about diverse learning needs, increase enrollment in early intervention and special education preschool programs, and help families to understand their roles and rights. One success story is as follows:

One client's grandson was supposed to be receiving in-home services for Early Intervention, but the Peer Advocate learned that the visits were not consistent. The Peer Advocate stepped in to support the grandmother in understanding her rights to consistent, scheduled home visits from Early Intervention, and she was able to successfully advocate for increased services. The Peer Advocate then guided the family to transition the child into early learning before the grandson turns three this year. The Peer Advocate helped the family ask the right questions and look in the right places, and they worked together to enroll the child in a program starting in fall 2017. As a result of their partnership, both the Peer Advocate and the family gained confidence in their ability to navigate the system and empowered each other to act as advocates for their children, their families, and their community.

In Greater East St. Louis (GESTL), where 99% of public school children are considered low-income and too few families were taking advantage of available early learning programs and services, improving quality and access to early education programs and services for children under five has been a major priority. In 2015, the GESTL Early Learning Partnership & Innovation Zone (ELP) launched Ready, Set, ENROLL! --a coordinated outreach, screening and enrollment campaign to educate families about their program options and reduce barriers to enrollment. ELP collaborated with early childhood centers, Head Start, Preschool Development Grantee, Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative, and Home Visiting programs to create a universal application for early education and prioritize the applications of families with the highest need. They have reached approximately 10% of GESTL children who are five and under. Said one parent participant: *"At Ready, Set, Enroll!, everyone was helpful and patient. The staff informed me of everything I needed to know and got me in and out in a reasonable time. It was nice to come to one building to enroll my children."*

Most recently, as a result of *Ready, Set, Enroll*, a relationship was established with the two homeless shelters in the community. An agreement was reached to provide monthly screenings and place-based services to shelter residents, through the local Early/Head Start program or the state-funded Prevention Initiative program (for children from birth to age three). In addition, a marketing firm led community stakeholders through a message mapping process. The community now has various approaches and messages that can be used to communicate to primary and secondary audiences: parents, agencies and media. GESTL's systems change strategy supports its partners using clear, concise, and consistent messaging about their efforts: 1) importance of the early years, 2) early identification-developmental screenings, 3) benefits of high quality early learning experiences and the correlation to kindergarten readiness.

Furthermore, the GESTL IZ coordinated efforts among community agencies and the school district to respond to ISBE's FY 17 Request For Proposals (RFP) for state-funded birth to five programs. Data and best practice approaches were shared that would complement each others' grant requests and scale up the birth to five early childhood pipeline. As a result, all three entities received grants, bringing additional slots to the community and much needed comprehensive services. The school district converted 200 half-day preschool slots to full-day slots of the "Preschool Expansion" model (state-funded) that includes comprehensive services. Another partner received 60 new birth to three slots, and the third partner added 80 new birth to three slots in Cahokia, a neighboring community to which many GESTL priority families relocate.

In North Lawndale, partners helped enroll over 600 children into early learning programs since 2013. In its effort to enroll families to quality programs that fit their unique needs, the North Lawndale IZ built an active referral pipeline with teen programs, hospitals, homeless shelters, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), home visiting programs, and others to connect families to high-quality early childhood education programs. Most recently, the North Lawndale IZ worked in collaboration with the North Lawndale Reads program across four elementary schools. It also partnered with Child and Family Connections (CFC) #9 to produce a document that all health providers can use to make referrals to Early Intervention, which will help both parties stay informed on the progress of the referrals. Additionally, they recruited an Occupational Therapist to join Early Intervention (EI) and who will be working with CFC #9 and the EI workgroup.

Though funded and supported through the RTT-ELC grant, Innovation Zones have also been leveraged to support enrollment goals in communities with Preschool Expansion Grant sites. In the South Suburban IZ, classrooms in five school districts and five privately owned child care centers operating Preschool Expansion classrooms are either full or near capacity as of December 2016. By building relationships with social service agencies, organizations, and parent educators assigned to the school districts, and developing a shared intake form, they were able to establish an enrollment pipeline that increased the recruitment and enrollment of very high needs children in quality early childhood programs. *"Our success in filling these seats began when the partnerships among community stakeholders started to form. We have found when school districts and centers are working closely with one another, important conversations start to happen, sharing resources start to happen, cross training for all teachers (school districts and centers) will occur. Parents no longer see competition among schools but a network of services to meet the needs of the entire family. Since there has been significant process with this level of partnership among the schools and centers, we ultimately would like to move toward to a shared curriculum with preschool programs across the IZ."*

In Williamson County, coordinating a county-wide outreach, screening, and enrollment effort, with oversight

from a cross-sector member Screening Collaborative, has led to a marked increase in the number and quality of consistent developmental screenings of children. As of today, 3,293 children have been screened (approximately 70% of the county's children from birth to age five), with information entered into a shared database. Because of its success, additional grant funds were awarded by a private foundation to build stronger relationships between the early childhood and health care sectors, expanding the work across the other counties in the southern Illinois region. In addition to these developmental screening initiatives, county leaders piloted a Child Care Assistance Program policy change designed to promote parent choice of quality programs and ensure continuity of care for their children. The results were used to inform new policy developed by the state to implement the new CCDBG guidelines.

The Williamson County Innovation Zone and its partners also developed a communication infrastructure that connects families with valuable information and resources. The infrastructure includes a family-friendly website, www.sifamilies.org, which includes a comprehensive calendar of family-friendly events throughout southern Illinois and informative articles on raising children. This is accompanied by an active social marketing site and partnership with parent-led social networks, which reach, on average, over 2,500 unique people each week.

On a systems level, the City of Chicago partnered with the city's Innovation Zones to support a recruitment and enrollment process launched online in 2016. The Chicago Innovation Zones met weekly during the summer to track obstacles to the rollout. The IZs shared feedback with the city team, often the same day. As a result, the city quickly resolved a communication error, which led to multiple schools mistakenly turning away eligible families. The City of Chicago has indicated that it wants to continue this dialogue in 2017 to guide improvements to the enrollment system.

During 2016, the IZ core team also worked with each IZ to develop sustainability plans and to explore ways to continue their enhanced enrollment and quality initiatives beyond the RTT-ELC grant. Some highlights include:

- While shifts in community habits could be sustained, funded leadership is necessary for continued success of community systems work. There is effort required to build trust, maintain relationships, connect partners, implement strategies, communicate progress, and convene regular working meetings. Collaborations serve as a back-end technology network, managing implementation of strategies aligned with the state's vision around improve quality, enrollment, and system efficiency.
- Investing in a collaboration leader and assistant is low cost and high impact for public and private funders. A small leadership team is able to leverage existing assets and partnerships, sustain vision, keep community partners accountable, collect and analyze data, and track implementation obstacles using evidence-based models. Funds for part-time community systems leadership can offset strict contract obligations, and serve as a feasible option for funders to consider. The networked community system infrastructure, with funded leadership, is essential to successful community systems work.

In 2017, the IZ core team will be creating brief fact sheets/case studies and video stories for each IZ, which can be used by the communities to tell the story of their successes to prospective funders and supporters.

Building Community Capacity

To build capacity for effective cross-system collaboration, at both the local level and within key sectors that are in position to provide support to local collaborations, the state's Consortium for Community Systems Development has continued to refine a model for training, technical assistance, and coaching, using the ABLe Systems Change Framework, developed by Michigan State University for using a systems approach to solve problems. One of the goals of this effort is to align technical assistance efforts across local system initiatives (including the Innovation Zones, All our Kids (AOK) Networks, and MIECHV) toward the State's goal of ensuring that all children (especially those with very high needs) receive continuous high quality services prenatal to third grade. By bringing in state administrators as ABLe Change coaches, the State also aims to infuse a systems change approach throughout the diverse sectors that touch families with high needs. Cohort 1 ABLe communities are: Chicago areas of Southeast Chicago and the greater Englewood area (Southside); Kane and DuPage Counties; and Addison and Thornton Township. The Cohort 2 communities are: Chicago neighborhoods of Logan Square and North Lawndale; Adams, McHenry, McLean, and Williamson Counties; Greater East St. Louis; Rock Island; Springfield; and Wheaton-Warrenville. Evaluation data from the two ABLe Cohorts are now

being analyzed, and a report is expected in spring 2017 along with recommendations on how to embed core concepts into community and state structures.

A plan is in place to bridge the models used in Innovation Zones with the ABL Change Framework. These models are highly complementary in their approaches to coach and guide the design and implementation of strategies in collaborations. The Innovation Zone support team will be offering orientation sessions to AOK Networks, MIECHV communities and the Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning during the last six months of the grant to extend learnings.

In addition, while assisting Innovation Zones in navigating various system hurdles, the IZ initiative worked to build capacity of several state and local agencies and sectors, including:

- The IZ core team worked closely with the state's Early Intervention Bureau to support data and planning for their federal State Systemic Improvement Plan.
- The IZ core team trained Child Care Resource and Referral agency staff on action learning and community systems development.
- The state's child welfare system is implementing sustainable recommendations from data gathering and focus groups hosted with the South Suburban Innovation Zone to increase enrollment of children from the child welfare system in early learning programs. Recommendations include simplifying documents, improving internal awareness of the state's school readiness team, and improving internal communications to elevate resources about early learning programs. The IZ core team is working closely with the Department of Children and Family Services' School Readiness Team until March 2017 to design materials, draft training sessions, and create website content.

Financial Incentives

In recognition of the real costs of pursuing and sustaining continuous quality improvement through ExceleRate Illinois, Illinois introduced financial incentives. The ExceleRate Illinois incentives were established after developing an Illinois-specific cost model that can be adjusted to reflect different program sizes as well as different combinations of funding streams and their associated requirements (such as child care only, child care and Preschool For All, child care and Head Start, etc.). Incentives for licensed child care centers were introduced in July 2014 and in December 2015 for licensed family child care homes. Centers and homes at three levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold) are eligible for a one-time bonus payment after their Circle of Quality is achieved. Bonus payments for centers ranged from \$1,000 to \$6,500, based on size and Circle of Quality attained. Bonus payment for family child care homes range from \$250 to \$950, based on size and Circle of Quality attained. In addition, centers and homes that care for children in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and achieve the Silver or Gold Circle of Quality can receive State-funded tiered reimbursement for the CCAP children in their program (a 10% and 15% add-on respectively). Most programs report that they use the tiered reimbursement to provide higher compensation to their staff than they would otherwise be able to provide.

The one-time general bonus incentives for center-based programs were exhausted in 2015. At the end of 2016, a small amount of one-time bonus incentives remained for family child care homes. With the No-Cost Extension, small pots of incentive funds have been set aside for special initiatives such as the "Licensed to Bronze" Initiative. Funds for tiered reimbursement within CCAP are not part of the RTT-ELC budget. Illinois continues to provide State-funded tiered reimbursement to licensed centers and licensed family child care homes, which is expected to continue through June 2017. Continuity of tiered reimbursement in FY18 and beyond for programs with an ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality will depend on the state budget.

Illinois remains committed to meeting its ambitious performance measures; in spite of continued stress on the early childhood system due to the ongoing budget impasse. Throughout 2017, Illinois will continue to incentivize participation in ExceleRate and conduct targeted outreach to programs within reach of achieving an ExceleRate circle of quality.

Performance Measures (B)(4)(c)(1)

In the table below, provide data on the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS. Targets must be consistent with those in the State's application unless a change has been approved.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS.					
Targets					
	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Total number of programs enrolled in the TQRIS	778	13,534	13,839	14,104	14,104
Number of programs in Tier 1	0	11,866	11,643	11,298	10,813
Number of programs in Tier 2	65	230	285	410	545
Number of programs in Tier 3	246	435	617	770	890
Number of programs in Tier 4	456	990	1,270	1,590	1,795
Number of programs in Tier 5	11	13	24	36	61
Number of programs enrolled but not yet rated					

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS.					
Actuals					
	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Total number of programs enrolled in the TQRIS	778	12,734	13,006	12,797	12,513
Number of programs in Tier 1	0	11,248	10,896	10,468	9,595
Number of programs in Tier 2	65	0	0	63	535
Number of programs in Tier 3	246	535	725	948	972
Number of programs in Tier 4	456	951	1,356	1,306	1,327
Number of programs in Tier 5	11	0	0	12	84
Number of programs enrolled but not yet rated					

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1) Data Notes

Describe the methodology used to collect the data, including any error or data quality information; and please include any definitions you used that are not defined in the notice.

The State now has complete lists of all school-based and community-based Preschool for All sites. A regular data exchange from DCFS with INCCRRA provides up-to-date information on all licensed child care centers and family child care homes. The ExceleRate Illinois application designed with INCCRRA gives detailed information about the funding sources in each site, which has enabled the State to extract and report on community-based Head Start and Preschool for All collaboration sites. Working with the Head Start State Collaboration Office, OECD has made significant progress in creating a comprehensive list of all Head Start programs operating in schools and community-based sites. This list can be cross-matched with INCCRRA's existing data, and missing programs can be added to its database. INCCRRA provides detailed information on programs entering, leaving and/or moving between Circle of Quality in ExceleRate Illinois.

The total number of programs enrolled in the State's QRIS is 12,513 as of 12/31/16. This consists of 1,144 school-based sites, 2,982 child care centers, and 8,387 family child care homes. [Head Start program enrollment is contained within the count of child care and school-based sites.] This is 89% of the original target of 14,104, which anticipated an increase in licensed sites over the life of the grant. The potential universe for this target has in fact narrowed by 1,591, with the loss of many family child care homes (-1,470) over the life of the grant -- a loss not offset by the modest increase in child care centers and school-based preschool sites.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1) Target Notes

For all targets that were not reached in the reporting year, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in reaching the established targets by the end of the grant period.

Overall, Illinois made significant progress toward its Performance Measure targets in 2016, although it still fell short. The total targets for Tiers 2 through 5 were 3,291 in Year Four, or 23% of the total target of 14,104. Actuals for Tiers 2 through 5 in Year Four were 2,918 in Year Four, (310 fewer than the target), meeting 89% of the total performance target of 14,104. However, if the performance measure target was reduced from 14,104 to the revised potential universe of 12,513, the actuals for Tiers through 2 through 5 would in fact be 23% of 12,513, or 100% of the reduced target.

Tier 1 of ExceleRate Illinois is the Licensing Circle of Quality, and includes both center-based and family child care homes. The Performance Measure for Tier 1 will always vary from year-to-year, due to upward movement to higher levels of the QRIS, as well as to changes in the actual numbers of child care centers and family child care homes to benchmark actual performance against. Illinois' total licensed programs numbered 11,369 in 2016, with 9,595 at Tier 1. This resulted from another net decline in the number of licensed programs in 2016 (-371, from 11,740 in 2015), along with healthy participation in QRIS Tiers 2-5. Additionally, in 2016, a total of 47 programs "moved down" quality levels (44 centers and 3 homes).

Tier 2, the Bronze Circle of Quality, is a robust series of trainings which address the full range of early learning program practices. It includes about 50 hours of training for the program administrator, and 30 hours for classroom teachers. In 2016, the State met 98% of its Performance Target for Tier 2, with 535 of the targeted 545 programs achieving the Bronze Circle. This represents an amazing recovery from 2015, which was severely impacted by the State's fiscal crisis when programs struggled to get the required number of personnel through the full course of trainings due to skeletal operations and significant staff turnover.

Tier 3, the Silver Circle of Quality, met 109% of its Performance Target, with 972 programs, 82 more than the target of 890.

Tier 4, the Gold Circle of Quality, met 74% of its Performance Target with 1,327 of the targeted 1,795 programs, 468 fewer than the target. The primary reason for this was the full launch of Family Child Care in ExceleRate, and the placement of NAFCC accreditation at the Silver, rather than the Gold, Circle of Quality. This resulted in 297 NAFCC programs aligning at Silver, rather than Gold, in 2015 and 2016. Also contributing to the shortfall was the pace of Head Start enrollment in ExceleRate. Although performance toward this target increased from 3% to 73% over the life of the grant, there are still many Head Start programs yet to enroll, the majority of which are expected to be Gold.

Tier 5, the Awards of Excellence, met 138% of its Performance Target, with 84 programs achieving Tier 5, 23 more than the target of 61.

Tiers 4 and 5 combined met 76% of the combined Performance Target, with 1,411 of the combined target of 1,856.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) Definition of Highest Tiers

For purposes of Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2), how is the State defining its "highest tiers"?

"Top Tiers of the QRIS" is defined as the Gold Circle of Quality (Tier 4), and the Awards of Excellence (Tier 5) in ExceleRate Illinois.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2)

In the table below, provide data on the number and percentage of children with high needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS. Targets must be consistent with those in the State's application unless a change has been approved.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2): 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 TQRIS.										
Targets: Number and percent of Children with High Needs in programs in top tiers of the TQRIS										
Type of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool			28,829	38%	37,933	50%	52,347	69%	58,416	77%
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹			8,765	26%	17,868	53%	24,947	74%	27,644	82%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C										
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619			13,906	38%	18,696	50%	25,495	69%	28,585	77%
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA										
Programs receiving CCDF funds	15,059	13%	18,946	16%	20,115	17%	21,839	19%	25,063	22%
Other 1										
<i>Describe:</i>										
Other 2										
<i>Describe:</i>										

¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) - Additional Other rows

Targets: Number and percent of Children with High Needs in programs in top tiers of the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Other 3										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 4										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 5										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 6										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 7										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 8										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 9										
<i>Describe:</i> Other 10										
<i>Describe:</i>										

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2): 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 TQRIS.

In most States, the **Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State** for the current reporting year will correspond to the **Total** reported in Table (A)(1)-3a. If not, please explain the reason in the data notes.

Actuals: Number and percent of Children with High Needs in programs in top tiers of the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State	Baseline			Year One			Year Two			Year Three			Year Four		
	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%
State-funded preschool	75,865			84,022	16,934	20.1%	75,231	44,291	58.9%	75,154	46,235	61.5%	73,118	53,974	73.8%
<i>Specify:</i>	Preschool For All (PFA)														
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹	36,644			51,053	2,257	4.4%	40,079	9,213	23%	42,170	10,891	25.8%	47,505	15,730	33.1%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	19,624			18,727			19,581			21,249			15,292		
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	37,083			37,518			37,378			37,745			37,879		
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA															
Programs receiving CCDF funds	115,188	15,059	13%	107,170	18,420	17.18%	135,873	17,555	12.9%	93,483	19,891	21.3%	71,912	21,528	29.9%
Other 1															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 2															
<i>Describe:</i>															

¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) - Additional Other rows

Actuals: Number and percent of Children with High Needs in programs in top tiers of the TQRIS

Type of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State	Baseline		Year One			Year Two			Year Three			Year Four			
	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%	# of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	#	%
Other 3															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 4															
<i>Describe:</i>															
Other 5															
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Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) Data Notes

Please indicate whether baseline data are actual or estimated; and describe the methodology used to collect the data, including any error or data quality information; and please include any definitions you used that are not defined in the notice.

All data for 2016 are actual counts. However, the number shown as served by CCDF in the Gold Circle of Quality may be somewhat undercounted, as it only includes programs which had submitted complete data on children by funding stream as of December 31, 2016. Year One data had been estimated from licensed capacity and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) voucher/certificate data.

Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) Target Notes

For all targets that were not reached in the reporting year, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in reaching the established targets by the end of the grant period.

State-funded preschool met 96% of its target for children enrolled at the Gold Circle of Quality, with an actual of 74% rather than 77%. However, in 2016 the number of children served in Gold Circle programs increased by 7,739 (+17%), despite a slight decrease (-2.7%) in the total number of children served. With the No-Cost Extension in 2017, targets are expected to be met or exceeded after completion of the 2016-17 monitoring cycle.

Head Start met 40% of its Gold Circle target in 2016, with an actual of 33% rather than 82% Gold enrollment. This is due to the requirement of site-level data for enrollment in ExceleRate. Although the number of Head Start grantees choosing the expedited pathway nearly doubled in 2016, a large majority of these sites were very small one- or two-classroom facilities, many serving less than 40 children. However, the actual number of Head Start children served in Gold programs increased by 4,839 (+44%) from Year Three to Year Four, despite a concurrent 13% (-5,336) increase in the total number of children enrolled in Head Start as more new EHS/Child Care Partnerships came into full implementation. Continued progress toward the target is expected with the No-Cost Extension in 2017, and dedicated assessment resources for Head Start programs as detailed in Section B(2) of the narrative.

The State exceeded its 2016 target of 22% for CCDF children enrolled in Gold Circle programs, with 30% of CCDF children enrolled, 136% of the target. It should be noted, however, that total CCDF enrollment continued to decline in 2016 due to changes in service and income eligibility requirements. CCDF enrollment declined by 21,571 (-23%) from Year Three to Year Four.

Validating the effectiveness of the State TQRIS (Section B(5) of Application).

Describe progress made during the reporting year in validating the effectiveness of the TQRIS during the reporting year, including the State's strategies for determining whether TQRIS tiers accurately reflect differential levels of program quality and assessing the extent to which changes in ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. Describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

Planning for the validation study began in January 2015 with execution of the contract with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina (UNC-FPG). The project plan was developed in partnership with relevant agency staff and a technical advisory panel. The team presented the overall goals of the validation study to the State's Interagency Team (IAT). The project plans were also discussed with a technical advisory panel composed of four researchers with content and/or methodological expertise in

Illinois' Quality Rating and Improvement System. The State submitted finalized plans to the federal officers for their review, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) approved the final study design. Research questions for the study include:

1. To what extent does ExceleRate Illinois differentiate levels of quality in programs overall and across each domain?
2. To what extent does a program's score on each domain contribute independently to its overall rating?
3. What combination and/or weighting of indicators best discriminate levels of quality?
4. Do children who participate in programs rated at higher Circles of Quality overall and across particular domains demonstrate greater gains in child outcomes compared to children who participate in programs rated at lower levels overall and across domains, and do findings differ by pathway through which programs entered ExceleRate Illinois?

To address these questions, the research team developed a random stratified sampling plan of centers from each of the three Circles of Quality (Licensed, Silver, and Gold; there were too few programs at Bronze level to sample) and based on region of the state and pathway (for Silver and Gold programs). In fall 2015, the team began recruiting programs to participate in the study. Despite some challenges retaining programs after agreeing to participate, the team was able to recruit 92% (161) of the target sample size with sufficient numbers of programs for each stratification factor:

- Type of program: 108 Centers, 53 School-based Pre-K programs;
- Region: 34 Chicago, 42 Collar Counties, 66 Downstate Urban, 19 Downstate Rural;
- Circle of Quality: 17 Licensed, 52 Silver, 92 Gold; and
- Pathway: 43 Accredited, 188 Assessed.

Classrooms within these programs were stratified by ages served and randomly selected for recruitment. In total, 233 preschool classrooms and 148 infant/toddler classrooms are included in the study. In the fall of 2015, the team completed direct assessment of the language, academic, and self-regulation skills of 738 preschool children who were consented into the study. The team also collected teacher ratings of academic and social skills and parent ratings of child health. Teachers were asked to complete surveys, including teacher demographics and teacher qualifications, information about their classroom, such as curricula used, group size/ratio, and number of children with disabilities. The research team gathered information about programs' family engagement practices.

In 2016, the research team collected observation data from 137 Infant/Toddler classrooms and 137 preschool-age classrooms. In addition, the team conducted interviews with 149 early care and education directors about the quality of their center or school. Finally, the team collected spring 2016 assessment data on 713 children who were consented into the study.

Over the past year, the project has experienced delays due to the absence of an executed data share agreement among UNC-FPG, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). OECD has worked to move this process along, which has slowed due to ongoing and deepening capacity issues within state agencies along with rapidly evolving data security protocol. OECD remains hopeful that this three-party data share agreement will be executed with sufficient time to allow for data analyses during the No-Cost Extension period. Remaining tasks include: analyzing data to determine changes in child outcomes associated with different levels of ExceleRate; providing input in to the ExceleRate revision committee; and planning for additional effectiveness studies to fully evaluate the impact of the Quality Rating and Improvement System.

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

Select the Focused Investment Areas addressed in your RTT-ELC State Plan:

- (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.
- (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.
- (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.
- (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.
- (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.
- (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- (E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.
- (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

Grantee should complete only those sections that correspond with the focused investment areas outlined in the grantee's RTT-ELC application and State Plan.

***ILLINOIS DID NOT ADDRESS FOCUS AREAS C(1), C(2), C(3),C(4) OR D(1)
IN THEIR RTT-ELC APPLICATION -
PAGES 53 of 125 THROUGH 59 of 125 HAVE BEEN DELETED -***

Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

(Section D(2) of Application)

The State has made progress in improving the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs with the goal of improving child outcomes (check all that apply):

- Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with your State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
- Implementing policies and incentives that promote professional and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention, including
 - Scholarships
 - Compensation and wage supplements,
 - Tiered reimbursement rates,
 - Other financial incentives
 - Management opportunities
- Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention
- Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for --
 - 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
 - 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.

Describe the progress made during the reporting year. Please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the grant period.

Throughout the years of the RTT-ELC grant, Illinois has engaged in a variety of activities and incentives *for educators to advance along Illinois' career pathway for early childhood, Gateways to Opportunity*. Illinois' stated goals in its RTT-ELC application are as follows:

1. Professional Development investments are coordinated across funding streams

Core strategies employed to meet this goal include the expansion of trainings recognized by Gateways, the enhanced functionality of the Online Training Calendar, increased support for career advancement for early childhood educators, and expansion of scholarship funding for completion of coursework to obtain an English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual endorsement.

2. Training and Professional Development opportunities in critical area of need are more effective

Illinois has worked to meet this goal through the expansion of effective coursework, cohorts and professional development opportunities to early childhood educators, and strengthening the knowledge and skills of faculty and trainers through forums, development opportunities, and innovative grants for joint projects between two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials

Illinois has made substantial progress toward increasing the number of early childhood professionals progressing to higher levels within Gateways to Opportunity. Gateways to Opportunity is a comprehensive statewide system designed to support practitioners in continuing their professional development. It provides links to education and training resources, awards credentials to qualified practitioners, and connects early childhood professionals to compensation opportunities and the Gateways Scholarship program. Gateways Credentials are symbols of professional achievement that validate the knowledge, skills and experience of early childhood educators.

Embedding credentials into the ExceleRate framework and simultaneously reducing the cost to achieve them have been powerful incentives to building a credentialed workforce. An ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality demonstrates program commitment, quality, and professional development, and one requirement of this is to ensure that a percentage of staff members have a Gateways Credential at specific benchmarks, especially Level 4 (Associate degree, AA) and Level 5 (Bachelor's degree, BA). Professional Development Advisors are available through Gateways to Opportunity to assist any early childhood practitioners with individual career guidance and professional development.

With the supports and incentives in place, Illinois has been able to exceed its target for credential achievement. At the inception of the grant, fewer than 1,200 Gateways Credentials had been awarded. As of 12/31/2016, 16,440 individuals hold Gateways Credentials. Of these, 13,256 are specifically relevant to ExceleRate requirements for staff qualifications:

- 8,224 ECE Level 2 and above (159% of 2016 target)
 - Level 4 (AA degree): 3,372
 - Level 5 (BA degree): 3,142
- 3,375 Infant Toddler Credentials (146% of 2016 target)
- 1,657 Illinois Director Credential (129% of 2016 target)

In 2016, the trend of increasing numbers of credential applications and awards continued. The State received 13,495 applications for credentials and awarded a total of 4,578 in 2016. Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) have worked hard to streamline processes, both to handle the higher volume of applications and to create a more sustainable system when federal RTT-ELC funding is no longer available to offset costs. As a result, the time to process an application in 2016 was 27 days -- down from 49 days in 2015, and 84 days in 2014.

Over the course of the RTT-ELC grant, Illinois has used funds to offset the cost of credential application, reducing the price to the applicant from \$350 to \$30. This, coupled with the linkage of credentials within ExceleRate, resulted in an increase in total credentials of more than 1000% since 2012. Through Illinois' No-Cost Extension, reduced price credentials have been extended through June 30, 2017. The price will likely rise after that point, but the level to which it would rise has not yet been determined.

Development of New Credentials

In 2016, Illinois concluded pilots and finalized frameworks for the Family Specialist, Family Child Care, and Technical Assistance Credentials. These new Gateways Credentials were reviewed and approved by various state councils as well as the administering agency (IDHS), and are codified in Administrative Rule. They are now available statewide as a part of the state's professional development system. Through those pilots, 335 credentials were awarded:

- Technical Assistance: 53
- Family Specialist: 115
- Family Child Care: 167

Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs aligned to competencies required for Gateways Credentials and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Gateways Credentials

Deepening alignment of the early childhood career pathways system (Gateways) with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) is a critical piece of developing a more unified approach to the early childhood workforce. Seventy IHEs in Illinois (86% of all Illinois' IHEs with early childhood/child development programs) are now "entitled" for one **or** more Gateways Credentials. This means their coursework is aligned with Gateways requirements, and allows students to apply for credentials via a streamlined route as they progress through their college coursework.

EPPI Grants

Another critical strand of work within the RTT-ELC initiative has been the "EPPI" (Early Childhood Professional Preparation Initiative) Grant project, which ended in December of 2016. Across two grant cohorts (2014-2015 and 2015-2016) two-thirds of Illinois' IHEs participated, including 20 universities and 37 community colleges representing all regions of the state. These EPPI grant partners worked together to collaboratively redesign early childhood educator preparation programs with focus on improving articulation and transfer pathways, meeting new state standards for licensure, and including Gateways Credentials as stackable elements within degree programs.

The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC), working with the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), completed two studies of the EPPI grantees. The [first study](#) examined effective practices for building cross-institutional partnerships engaged in program redesign. The [second study](#) identified promising innovations from both cohorts of EPPI participants. The long-term potential impact from these grants is the creation of better and diverse pathways for seamless navigation for career advancement. Examples of partnership projects include:

- Creation of new articulation agreements to address transfer of early childhood-specific courses between two- and four- year partners
- Promotion of diversity by creating specific pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse professionals already working in the field to advance their education through stackable credentials leading to degrees
- Employment of more robust advising strategies to help students move more seamlessly between two- to four-year IHEs and complete a credential or degree
- Design or ramp up of non-licensure bachelor degrees
- Redesign of the AAS track to enable full transfer of early childhood courses

HERO Website

In response to requests from many teacher preparation program higher education faculty over the last several years, the State launched a website in 2014 specifically for early childhood faculty. Known as EC HERO (Early Childhood Higher Education Resources Online), this site (<http://ilfacultyresources.org/>) provides resources for higher education faculty and contains links to articles, publications, websites, blogs, videos, research, and classroom activities that might be of interest. There is also a listing of upcoming events (local, state, national and international) that are relevant to early childhood. Resources and events can be added by members of HERO and are continually updated. Forum boards are available for discussions. The State contractor continues to promote the use of HERO through fliers, emails and presentations at meetings.

Data Linkage Project

In late 2016, the Illinois Board of Higher Education and INCCRRA began partnering to link datasets to explore research questions around the extent to which Gateways Credentials holders enroll and complete degrees at higher education institution. Through this project, the State seeks to gain a better understanding of enrollment and completion patterns within the early childhood workforce among credential seekers. Analysis and reporting will take place in 2017.

Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities in alignment with the Gateways Framework

Credentials & Competencies

The Gateways Credentials framework, developed with faculty and other experts, was built around benchmarks meeting specific academic standards. Early childhood teacher preparation, as well as other fields, is moving towards competency as the criteria for success in higher education --what a student knows and is able to do. Transitioning to a competency-based system requires both the reorganization of Gateways Credentials, as well as continued alignment work with teacher prep programs at IHEs.

RTT-ELC funds, along with state agencies and private philanthropy, have enabled extensive work to align the credentials with competencies. An example of the work underway in this transition is the reorganization of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, with an existing framework of 347 benchmarks. In collaboration with the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Department of Human Services, INCCRRA, and faculty from across the state, these benchmarks were aligned to a streamlined framework of 57 competencies. Competencies will create system efficiencies with the use of common assessment tools for two- and four-year IHEs, and provide coherence and consistency with the state's training infrastructure

The ECE, Infant Toddler, Illinois Director, Family Child Care and Family Specialist Credentials were reorganized into a competency basis between March and December of 2016. The Technical Assistance Credential work begins in January of 2017, and will assure that ALL Gateways Credentials utilize a competency basis. In the fall of 2016, five higher education institutions also piloted a new process of becoming entitled for Gateways Credentials based on the utilization of competencies. This pilot will inform changes that will be made and implemented across the state in January/ February of 2017.

Strengthening the skills and knowledge of faculty and trainers

Engagement of IHE faculty has been a core strategy of the RTT-ELC work. The annual Gateways Higher Education Forum was held in April 2016, with participation from more than 60% of the state's IHEs. Workshops were selected through an RFP process intentionally designed to meet areas of critical need, including increasing faculty knowledge of pedagogy. Two regional meetings were held in the summer of 2016 for faculty to learn about and plan for the transition of Gateways Credentials to a competency-based model, while four regional meetings from October 2016 thru January 2017 provided faculty with one-on-one technical assistance to convert their programs into a competency-based system.

Using RTT-ELC funds, our state partners have also created a robust set of resources for higher education faculty to support the transition of coursework to competencies. The Assessment Toolbox as well as online modules and resources, provide faculty with tools and strategies for mapping curriculum to competencies and designing appropriate assessments. Consistency in the assessment of competencies across institutions will advance articulation and ensure greater transparency for professionals in the field. To date, 70 institutions of higher education in Illinois have participated in this process, mapping over 700 ECE courses to competencies.

INCCRRA also convenes an Annual Summit of Trainers with approximately 150 Registry-Approved trainers from across our state agencies and professional development systems. Sessions cover the range of trainer/training delivery topics, as well as standardized curricula updates. INCCRRA also conducts quarterly CCR&R Training Coordinator webinars, and hosts an annual workday to share relevant information regarding training, system changes, and administrative practices. INCCRRA also facilitates regular communications with trainers and training partners via email updates, newsletters and periodic survey efforts.

Integration of Training Supports

For nearly two decades, INCCRRA has been the state's intermediary to support workforce development for the child care system required under Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). INCCRRA also delivers training on behalf of ISBE for the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) transition efforts. INCCRRA maintains the i-learning platform, which includes ExceleRate and credential trainings, many of which are available in both English and

Spanish.

In addition to INCCRRA, there are currently 116 Authorized Entities, professional training organizations eligible for Gateways recognition and credential credit. Earning authorization requires evaluation of the organization's rigor and protocol for trainers and content. In 2016, ISBE began granting licensure credit for Registry-approved trainings, deepening the integration of training supports.

System efforts continue for the expansion and further development of trainings that count for Gateways credential credit - particularly given the dramatic increase in the number of Credentials available. "Bundling" was piloted with ExceleRate trainings in 2015-2016, and has since been implemented statewide. This maximizes utilization of existing trainings, and ensures related content and depth to issue credit in for training points, which in turn articulate into credentials. Work undertaken in 2016 has prepared for a Spring 2017 launch of an expanded overall menu of trainings with credential credit to support both new and renewal application efforts, including infant mental health.

As a strategy to streamline and allow for better integration of professional development supports, the former "Five Stages of Training" was revised and simplified into the **Gateways Registry Levels of Learning**. This redevelopment allows for more universal application and transparency in categorizing Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced training, inclusive of many content areas and across multiple systems. Levels are based on the depth of content rather than experience or role of the participant. Levels are assigned, reviewed and aligned across the Gateways system, in partnership with individual trainers and Authorized Entities. The Gateways Levels of Learning will initiate inclusion of competencies during 2017.

Gateways to Opportunity Registry

The online Gateways Registry Portal (or "dashboard") continues to be a popular tool utilized by Registry Members to apply for programs and supports online and to access reports such as their Professional Development Record (PDR). In 2016, functionality that allows users to create and manage their own online Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) was introduced. The plan's format is aligned with requirements for ExceleRate so that individuals who choose to use the online tool can submit the output as evidence toward meeting ExceleRate standards and be assured that the format will be approved.

The Gateways Statewide Training Calendar has been enhanced to reflect ISBE approval for licensure credit for Gateways Registry Approved trainings. Authorized Entities continue to be able to manage and add to their trainings to the calendar through the "AE Portal". This allows approved agencies to enter and manage their trainings, and participant data is automatically shown on the individual's Professional Development Record (PDR). Functionality was increased to allow users of the calendar to quickly and easily search for trainings by the new levels of learning, which meet ExceleRate standards and/or count for a credential credit. Enhancements were made to allow Professional Development providers to accept online registration through the calendar for their trainings.

Additional functionality was created in the form of web-services that allow for online training completion data to be submitted directly to the Gateways Registry electronically and appear on the PDR within minutes. These web-services are currently being used with the Gateways i-learning System, which resulted in nearly 95,500 online training completions being automatically recorded within the Registry in 2016 alone. In addition to the Gateways i-learning System, the web-service is being used by the Erikson TownSquare online training system, and resulted in 131 online training completions being automatically recorded through that site in 2016.

Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the competencies in Gateways

Through adaptation in policies and programs that help early childhood educators earn credentials, the State continued to see growth in the number of new credentials awarded in 2016 (see tables below). Illinois surpassed its goals for the awarding of each of the three credentials (Director, Early Childhood, and Infant Toddler credentials). In 2016, the State awarded 514 Director credentials (goal 177). The State awarded 5,597 ECE credentials (goal 2,362). The State awarded 1,036 Infant Toddler credentials (goal 255) in 2015.

While the rates of increase in 2016 were below rates of increase in 2015, the State was particularly pleased to see that practitioners are earning higher levels of credentials than anticipated. For example, at the credential level generally equivalent to an Associate's degree, the State set goals of awarding 107 Director credentials, 220 ECE credentials, and 37 Infant Toddler credentials. However, the awards far surpassed the goals, and the State awarded 334; 1,127; and 516 credentials respectively. In addition, at the credential level generally equivalent to or exceeding the Bachelor's degree, the State had goals of awarding 70 Director's credentials, 245 ECE credentials, and 63 Infant Toddler credentials. However, the awards far surpassed the goals, and the State awarded 180, 881, and 173 respectively.

The increase in those awarded credentials can be attributed to a number of State initiatives, including the reduction in cost to receive a credential, the integration of the credential in the ExceleRate Illinois, changes to credential requirements that presented unintended barriers to completion, and an ongoing program known as Jump Start. Through Jump Start, the State has deployed credential specialists to colleges and universities to educate those in early childhood programs about the requirements and pathways to receiving a credential. Specialists provide faculty and students with resources and materials to apply for credentials. This program has been very successful, as many faculty members know much about their own programs but may not have in-depth knowledge about how their programs dovetail with Illinois' credentials for early childhood educators.

Illinois is unsure whether the State will experience a continuation of this trend in 2017, due to issues surrounding the state budget. In 2016, the State received over 13,500 applications for credentials, many of which remain in various stages of processing or award. In many cases, the applicants also need to complete coursework to be eligible for a credential. Additionally, two new policies are scheduled to take effect in 2017, which require higher-level credentials for both directors and infant/toddler teachers.

Support to Directors and Credential Candidates

The State has been working to ensure that the process to apply for and receive a credential is as user friendly as possible for candidates. One such effort in 2015 included a project to reach out to center directors in Illinois to determine process obstacles (real or perceived) that delay or deter credential attainment. One thing that was clear is that directors wanted more information to help them support their staff in navigating the credential process.

In response to this, the State developed some FAQs and documents that outline the process and timeline for attaining a credential. In addition, Illinois looked for ways to help directors better track where their staff were in the credential process. The State determined a key way to get information to directors was through the Gateways Registry Director Portal.

The Gateways Registry Director Portal was implemented in 2014 and features online access to tools that help administrators manage their programs. Access to the portal is restricted and must be requested by the director. Initially the online tools were intended to monitor compliance with licensing regulations, including staff membership in the Gateways Registry and completion of required annual training hours. With Gateways Credentials embedded in ExceleRate, the State changed policy in 2015 to give directors additional information, which helps monitor individual progress toward credential achievement. A new report was created, allowing directors to view staff educational qualifications, credentials achieved, status of credential applications, and gaps in training/coursework. This report helps directors encourage staff in their educational progress, and ensure overall program compliance with ExceleRate standards. At the end of 2016, the Director Portal had 1,927 users and is utilized by nearly half (1,268) of the licensed centers in Illinois.

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

Illinois has made significant strides in building its capacity to report more accurate and comprehensive information on the Illinois early childhood workforce. In 2016, Illinois continued to focus efforts in this area on building data systems and integrating administrative data to record and track information related to educators' development, education, credentials, and retention in the Gateways to Opportunity Registry. In late 2012, the Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS) implemented an administrative rule change requiring all staff in licensed child care facilities to establish a profile in the Gateways Registry. With this change, the Registry saw an increase in participation from 32,402 to 56,503 members in 2013 and to 80,769 members by the end of

2014. By the end of 2016, just over 112,000 individuals had joined the Gateways Registry, and 80,300 individuals had “active” records. Currently, the Gateways system retains "inactive" records as well, enabling professionals to maintain information if they flow in and out of the field. License-exempt providers (home-based and centers) who participate in the State's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) will be required to join the Gateways Registry in 2017.

In 2014, Illinois increased its capacity to review and verify voluntarily submitted official transcripts of those who self-enroll in the Registry to ensure accurate data. Verified transcript information is now included in the Registry for nearly 23,000 individuals. The increase in participants in the Registry and the integration of verified data allows Illinois to track and promote professional development of its early childhood workforce.

Products of these efforts have allowed for additional current and future data reporting on the workforce in Illinois. For example, workforce data from the Gateways Registry were shared with the State's Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) to inform the work of the Workforce Development and Pathways Committee regarding credential and degree attainment. In addition, data have been shared with the P-20 Council and Illinois Early Learning Council to build awareness around the characteristics of the licensed child care workforce. Use of Registry data will also enable IDHS to revise its biannual Salary and Staffing Survey (to be conducted in 2017), reducing redundancy and enhancing data collection. In 2016, the Gateways Registry was able to provide data for the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth as they launched an ambitious cross-agency project to better prepare, support, attract and retain the early childhood workforce.

Policies that Promote Career and Professional Advancement

Illinois has continued its programs that provide supports and incentives to providers to advance along Illinois' career pathway for early childhood educators.

Scholarships

Illinois continued to provide scholarships to those working towards a credential through the Gateways Scholarship Program, funded by IDHS. In 2016, ISBE was unable to fund scholarships due to the lack of an appropriation for infrastructure in FY2016. These scholarships pay a percentage of tuition and fees on a sliding scale and are available across a wide range of education levels, from beginning practitioners to those who have a Bachelor's degree and are working towards additional certification.

With RTT-ELC funds, Illinois expanded its scholarship program and provided support to licensed educators with Bachelor's degrees to pursue an English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual Education endorsement. Teachers from around the state had the opportunity to join educational cohorts leading to an ESL or Bilingual endorsement issued by the Illinois State Board of Education, to fulfill a July 1, 2017 requirement for Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG)-funded programs. Since its inception, 166 teachers have been supported by Race to the Top funds to pursue an ESL or Bilingual endorsement. Currently, there are two active cohorts, hosting a total of 27 teachers working on an ESL or Bilingual endorsement. Of the 139 teachers that have completed the required coursework for an ESL or Bilingual Certification, 85% (118) have applied for and received their endorsement through the Illinois State Board of Education.

Compensation and Wage Supplements

Illinois continued implementation of the State-funded Great START (Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers) program, which provides wage supplements to providers in full-day, year-round programs based on their educational attainment and continued employment. In FY 2016, the State provided wage supplements to 3,609 individuals. These are provided via state funds, not RTT-ELC funds. IDHS reports the level of funding allocated for Great START in FY 16 is \$6.18 million.

Tiered Reimbursement Rates and Bonuses:

As described in Section B(4), Illinois introduced incentives for child care centers and family child care homes that participate in ExceleRate Illinois. Centers and homes can receive a one-time bonus payment when they achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold Circle of Quality. Silver and Gold centers and homes are eligible for tiered

reimbursement (a 10% or 15% rate add-on, respectively) for the CCAP children served. Most programs report that they use the tiered reimbursement to provide higher compensation to their staff than they would otherwise be able to provide. Tiered reimbursement is also available to license-exempt home providers who choose to complete supplemental training. One-time bonus payments are funded through RTT-ELC. Tiered reimbursement, which is ongoing, is funded by IDHS.

Reduced Cost for Credentials

The credentials were developed as a voluntary, opt-in system, and the administrative costs were initially borne by the participants. As the State incorporated these as a mandatory part of ExceleRate Illinois, the State began to subsidize this cost. In July 2013, with RTT-ELC funds, Illinois significantly reduced the cost for educators to apply for and receive credentials from \$300 to \$30. Additionally, through a public-private partnership, the \$30 credential fee and costs for students graduating from entitled schools was waived. As a result of the reduced cost and the inclusion of the credentials in the ExceleRate Illinois standards, the State has seen a significant increase in those applying for and receiving credentials.

Incorporating Credentials into the QRIS

In 2013, Illinois integrated the credentials into the requirements for ExceleRate Illinois. ExceleRate-recognized programs must demonstrate that a rising percentage of their teaching and administrative staff have attained a Gateways Credential. This has proven a highly-effective strategy. As detailed elsewhere in this narrative, Gateways Credentials have grown from 1,200 to 16,440 (an increase of 15,240/1300%) over the life of the RTT-ELC Grant.

Performance Measures (D)(2)(d)(1):

In the tables below, indicate State progress toward meeting ambitious yet achievable targets for: 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.

Performance Measure (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.

Baseline and Annual Targets					
	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Total number of "aligned" institutions and providers	45	48	53	58	63
Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an "aligned" institution or provider	170	240	360	540	790

Performance Measure (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.

Actuals					
	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Total number of "aligned" institutions and providers	45	49	61	67	69
Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an "aligned" institution or provider	170	353	688	1,529	2,274

Performance Measure (D)(2)(d)(1) Data Notes

Data are from Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

The 69 providers were entitled to provide ECE, Infant Toddler Credential (ITC), and/or Illinois Director Credential (IDC) credentials. Of the 69, 44 are two-year institutions and 25 are four-year institutions.

The 2,274 individuals include those receiving a ECE, ITC, IDC, Family Child Care (FCC), Family Specialist Credential (FSC), Technical Assistance Credential (TA), or SAYD credential.

Performance Measure (D)(2)(d)(1) Target Notes

For all targets that were not reached in the reporting year, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in reaching the established targets by the end of the grant period.

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Performance Measures (D)(2)(d)(2):

In the tables below, indicate State progress toward meeting ambitious yet achievable targets for: 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.

Performance Measure (D)(2)(d)(2): Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.										
Baseline and Annual Targets										
Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	<i>Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year</i>									
	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
<Select Progression>	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Credential Type 1	244		48	20%	58	20%	80	23%	107	25%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 1									
Credential Type 2	187		37	20%	44	20%	53	20%	64	20%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 3	115		5	5%	6	5%	6	5%	6	5%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 4	1,532		612	40%	857	40%	1,200	40%	1,680	40%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 1									
Credential Type 5	107		54	50%	96	60%	154	60%	205	50%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 6	24		7	29%	9	29%	10	25%	12	24%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 7	111		61	55%	103	60%	165	60%	220	50%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 4									
Credential Type 8	139		70	50%	106	51%	174	55%	245	50%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Levels 5 and 6									
Credential Type 9	107		32	30%	41	29%	72	40%	125	50%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 10	6		12	200%	14	78%	23	72%	37	67%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 11	49		14	29%	18	29%	23	28%	30	29%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 4									
Credential Type 12	84		50	60%	44	33%	51	29%	63	28%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Levels 5 and 6									
Credential Type 13	342		17	5%	36	10%	73	20%	88	20%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Teacher Certificate with Bilingual or ESL endorsement or approval									

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

Actuals

Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	<i>Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year</i>									
	Baseline		Year One		Year Two		Year Three		Year Four	
<Select Progression>	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Credential Type 1	244		32	13%	100	36%	449	119%	334	40%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 1									
Credential Type 2	187		30	16%	62	29%	232	83%	167	33%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 3	115		4	3%	9	8%	19	15%	13	9%
<i>Specify:</i>	Director's Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 4	1,532		605	39%	1,256	59%	2,057	61%	2,720	50%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 1									
Credential Type 5	107		28	26%	109	81%	554	227%	648	81%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 6	24		11	46%	63	180%	231	237%	221	67%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 7	111		116	105%	290	128%	1,908	369%	1,127	46%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Level 4									
Credential Type 8	139		128	92%	249	93%	1,779	345%	881	38%
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential, Levels 5 and 6									
Credential Type 9	107		62	58%	169	100%	733	217%	468	44%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 2									
Credential Type 10	6		3	50%	9	100%	58	322%	52	68%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 3									
Credential Type 11	49		92	188%	122	87%	468	178%	516	71%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Level 4									
Credential Type 12	84		87	104%	92	54%	312	119%	173	30%
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Toddler Credential, Levels 5 and 6									
Credential Type 13	342		226							
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Teacher Certificate with Bilingual or ESL endorsement or approval									

Performance Measure (D)(2)(d)(2) Data Notes

Please describe the methodology used to collect the data, including any error or data quality information.

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) tracks the information for credentials 1-3, and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) tracks the information for ESL/ Bilingual endorsements. These data represent the number of new credentials (not renewals) awarded annually.

Percentages are calculated based on the percentage increase in the total number of individuals with said credential/certification from one year to the next.

Credential Type 1: Director Credential; Credential Type 1 is the Illinois Director Credential (IDC). There are three levels of the IDC.

Credential Type 2: Early Childhood Education (ECE) Credential; Credential Type 2 is the Illinois Early Childhood Education (ECE) credential. There are six levels of the ECE credential.

Credential Type 3: Infant Toddler Credential; Credential Type 3 is the Illinois Infant Toddler Credential (ITC). There are five levels of the ITC.

Credential Type 4: The number in the table represents the number of educators with an Early Childhood Teaching Certificate who earned an English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement or Bilingual endorsement each year. Due to a recent redesign of the data system for Professional Educator Licenses in Illinois, the number of new ESL or Bilingual endorsements earned in 2016 by educators with an Early Childhood endorsement is not yet available.

The number of credentials by level within each credential type are indicated. Due to table size restrictions, levels are collapsed where cell sizes are few.

Performance Measure (D)(2)(d)(2) Target Notes

For all targets that were not reached in the reporting year, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in reaching the established targets by the end of the grant period.

Illinois was successful in meeting Performance Measure Targets for all Gateways Credentials this year.

Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry (Section E(1) of Application)

The State has made progress in developing a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that (check all that apply):

- Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- 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;
- Is administered beginning no later than the start of the school year in the fourth year of the grant to children entering a public school kindergarten. States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;
- 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
- 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).

Describe the domain coverage of the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment, validity and reliability efforts regarding the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, and timing of the administration of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

As noted in the State's Phase I and Phase II applications, Illinois issued a Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) for a kindergarten entry and progress assessment system in October 2011. In June 2012, a contract was signed with WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies (WestEd), with a subcontract to Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research Center, Graduate School of Education, University of California - Berkeley (BEAR Center) to develop and implement the Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS). This contract uses existing state funding. KIDS is an adaptation of the Desired Results Developmental Profile-School Readiness (DRDP-SR). KIDS included the development of additional domains that were not addressed in the DRDP-SR, but are in the Illinois Kindergarten Learning Standards. It also includes the development of a sub-scale that assesses Spanish language development.

KIDS includes the following 11 domains:

- Approaches to Learning/Self-Regulation
- Social Emotional Development
- Literacy and Language Development
- English Language Development
- Spanish Language Development
- Math - Cognitive
- Science - Cognitive
- Physical Development

- Health
- History and Social Studies
- Visual and Performing Arts

KIDS is designed to be completed three times during the kindergarten year (at approximately 40, 105, and 170 days into the school year.)

The DRDP-SR was chosen as the model to adapt, in part, because it already had evidence of adequate validity and reliability. However, given the modifications and extensions that were made to the tool, Illinois recognized the need to complete additional studies of the tool's validity. Illinois' plan included a process for evaluating the tool's validity, beginning with establishing construct validity through a field study which was completed in 2014 and a calibration study that was completed in 2015.

There has also been a process implemented for determining KIDS 'criterion-zone boundaries' for readiness. This process defines regions along the scales of measurement of the various KIDS domains associated with Illinois standards of readiness, both at the beginning and end of kindergarten. This is to address the question of how KIDS' results relate to standards-based expectations for children's readiness at the beginning and end of kindergarten. The finalized data and materials should be available in the spring of 2017.

Currently teachers, who may be using the KIDS instrument, are attending a two-day training to learn how to gather evidence for and complete the assessment, use the results to inform the planning of curriculum, and share results with parents. Administrators are also invited to attend the two-day training, or attend a half-day training specifically for administrators. Teachers can find resources for implementing KIDS on the KIDS website (www.illinoiskids.org), including tutorials, observation resources, checklists, and articles of interest.

With Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) funds, Illinois contracted with WestEd to develop an online system through which teachers can establish and maintain reliability in administering KIDS. This system was developed, pilot-tested and completed in 2015.

The current scope of school readiness data collection does not cover entire domains, but includes measures from the domains of Language and Literacy Development, Cognitive Math Development, Social Emotional Development, and Approaches to Learning. The revised implementation plan is described below.

Describe the progress made during the reporting year. Please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the grant period.

As of December 2016, 4,850 kindergarten teachers and 1,467 School Administrators participated in the two-day KIDS Implementation training. An additional 1,660 School Administrators participated in the KIDS half-day Administrator training, and 207 individuals completed KIDS coach training. The state has approximately 760 districts with kindergarten classes; of those districts 87% have attended a training. The districts participating are geographically diverse and together represent the ethnic and economic diversity of the state.

Teacher and administrator feedback from the pilot has been utilized to customize, restructure, and simplify the KIDS instrument, training, and implementation process. School district feedback has been collected through surveys, focus groups, and from program coaches. In response to the feedback, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) explored modifications in conjunction with the KIDS Advisory Committee. Subsequently, ISBE initiated rule changes to revise the implementation schedule and reduce the amount of information that is collected and reported to ISBE, significantly reducing the requirements for districts. Those changes went into effect in September 2015, applying to the 2015-16 school year. The 2015-16 school year served largely as a training year for many districts and state-wide implementation will begin in 2017-18.

At the December 2015 board meeting, the ISBE board approved an amendment to the ISBE Goal 1 in the Illinois State Board of Education Strategic Plan, which included as the first part of the goal, "Every child in each public

school system in the State of Illinois deserves to attend a school system wherein all kindergartners are assessed for readiness.” In furtherance of this goal, and in response to continued concerns from some school districts about the feasibility of implementing KIDS, the KIDS Advisory Committee was charged with further reducing the time burden of reporting school readiness data to ISBE while ensuring that all kindergartners are assessed for readiness. In November 2015, the Committee made recommendations, based on a developmental research review conducted by WestEd, to collect data at the beginning of the school year on 14 high-impact measures for all kindergartners. This is a shift from the current requirements, which include data collection at three points in time on multiple domains. The 14 measures are taken from four of the readiness domains discussed earlier.

The new plan for collecting kindergarten readiness data requires less information to be reported by school districts but continues to provide the state with a summative snapshot of the readiness of kindergartners across the state. School readiness information is an important part of the educational continuum that will inform programs, services, and policies to improve early learning outcomes and ensure that more children are arriving to kindergarten ready to succeed and eager to learn. This will also help identify and target readiness gaps that may exist across or within communities and to ensure quality and equity for each and every child.

Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, districts will report annually to ISBE on 14 measures of school readiness for each kindergartener. Data for each student, based on local instruction and assessment practices, will be reported through the KIDSTech rating system. These measures were selected because they provide information about unique and important aspects of behavior that are predictive (based on empirical research) of kindergarten readiness and later academic success. The 11 domains and 55 measures of the full KIDS instrument continue to be available to schools at no cost. Also, school districts looking to use KIDS to monitor progress and growth can continue to collect and enter data during the winter and spring reporting periods.

14 State-Collected School Readiness Measures

Approaches to Learning - Self-Regulation

- ATL-REG: 1 - Curiosity and Initiative in Learning
- ATL-REG: 2 - Self-Control of Feelings and Behavior
- ATL-REG: 3 - Engagement and Persistence

Social and Emotional Development

- SED 3 - Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults
- SED 4 - Relationships and Social Interactions with Peers

Cognition: Math

- COG: MATH 1 - Classification
- COG: MATH 2 - Number Sense of Quantity
- COG: MATH 3 - Number Sense of Math Operations
- COG: MATH 6 - Shapes

Language and Literacy Development

- LLD 3 - Communication and Use of Language (Expressive)
- LLD 4 - Reciprocal Communication and Conversation
- LLD 6 - Comprehension of Age-Appropriate Text
- LLD 8 - Phonological Awareness

- LLD 9 - Letter and Word Knowledge

The State is especially appreciative of the private sector support it received in 2013, 2014, and 2015 to support the implementation of KIDS. The Joyce Foundation provided a grant of \$1.2 million to WestEd to hire regional coaches who provide training, technical assistance, and support to administrators and teachers throughout the state as Illinois builds towards statewide implementation of the instrument. The feedback from teachers and administrators has repeatedly been that the coaches have made the difference in them being able to successfully implement KIDS. With RTT-ELC funding, the regional coaches have continued. Alternative funding is being explored to continue the coaches once the RTT-ELC funding ends.

Early Learning Data Systems (Section E(2) of Application)

The State has made progress in enhancing its existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or building or enhancing a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and that (check all that apply):

- Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- 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;
- 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
- Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Describe the progress made during the reporting year, including the State's progress in building or enhancing a separate early learning data system that aligns with and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and that meets the criteria described above. Describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made in this area by the end of the grant period.

Illinois continues to pursue its plans to build an early learning data system as part of a broader interagency effort for the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). This approach allows us to leverage existing and developing resources, including the ILDS legal and governance structures, administrative personnel, and end-user supports.

While progress towards this goal has seemed painfully slow at times, there is progress nonetheless. The Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), housed at Northern Illinois University (NIU), has completed an initial child record match of a large subset of Preschool for All (PFA), Prevention Initiative from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and child care data from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). This process creates a Master Client Index and enables data matching for an unduplicated count of children served in the early childhood system. NIU presented the inaugural report of matched data to the Interagency Team and the Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee of the Early Learning Council in July 2016.

Including Head Start data in this project is the next step. An initial data transfer occurred in summer 2016 but was incomplete. Data contractors for both the ILDS and Head Start are working together to ensure a successful and complete transfer of data that can then be integrated into the Master Client Index during the next Child Matching Project (2017).

Another data integration goal is to incorporate Birth to Three (home visiting and Early Intervention) and early childhood workforce data into the ILDS. In the Spring of 2016, 6 of the 7 ILDS agencies agreed to the terms of a standard data sharing agreement with two or more agencies and a third party. This approach will ensure a form is in place for multiple IDHS/ISBE projects, not just a particular study. The CDDA Data Share Agreement between IDHS and NIU is now finalized, an important milestone that lays a solid foundation for ongoing data integration and cross-agency analysis and study. NIU anticipates that a Master Client Index for the IDHS Birth to Three data will be completed in the spring of 2017, which will enable the matching of this critical body of data at IDHS to data from other state systems.

Another large body of work kicked off in 2016 to enhance ISBE data systems that support the early childhood system. Central to this project is the linkage of early childhood professional data and student enrollment data. This project will also enhance the quality of PFA data collection, add additional fields required by the Preschool Expansion Grant, and incorporate school readiness data collection (KIDS). The start of this project was delayed, but is now largely on track in a modified time frame, and is expected to be complete in the summer of 2017.

In addition to the child and family data collection work described above, program-level data are collected in the Data Tracking Program (DTP) housed at Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA). This system connects with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), IDHS, and ISBE. It includes ExceleRate data on all licensed programs and school-based preschool programs in Illinois. Highlights of progress towards a fully integrated program-level data system include:

- Developed comprehensive data tracking for ExceleRate allowing for entry of applications, program eligibility decisions, and reporting of accomplishments to partners and stakeholders;
- Enhanced data collection and tracking for Quality Specialists to better capture their technical assistance and consultation activities in support of program quality improvement;
- Created an online portal for early care and education programs to apply for ExceleRate online, and to input basic information about their program. This portal will continue to be developed through the remainder of the grant to allow programs to manage additional profile details;
- Released two iterations of the program search tool to the parent-focused ExceleRate website. This tool allows the public to search for programs by name, location, and rating;
- Implemented an electronic data sharing process to receive updated program licensing data from the DCFS and update records in DTP accordingly. This ensures that the list of programs on the ExceleRate website is up-to-date and has also allows for an efficiency by relying on this data from the authoritative source instead of having to ask early childhood education (ECE) programs to provide a copy of their license for verification;
- Developed a program “lookup” table to allow for linking ECE program data from unrelated data systems through a common program identifier.

The Gateways to Opportunity Registry is the primary data system for the early childhood workforce. High level progress to date includes:

- Provided support and resources for over 80,000 Gateways Registry Members, including a fully-staffed Help Desk with live phone support, online chat, online knowledge base, and training videos.
- Developed a “Director Portal” to allow early care and education program administrators/directors to manage their staff listing and to have their staff Registry membership and training completion summary. The portal was also enhanced to provide additional information about staff application for, and attainment of, Gateways Credentials to further support them in the process of applying for an ExceleRate Circle of Quality.
- Enhanced the Statewide Training Calendar by adding an online registration feature, and additional options to allow for ECE professionals to search for trainings that can be used toward an ExceleRate standard or Gateways Credential. Continued support of the “Authorized Entity Portal”, which allows training agencies to enter approved trainings into the calendar and reconcile attendance, contributed to a 179% increase in the number of trainings on the calendar.
- Created a “DCFS Portal” to allow DCFS licensing representatives to access information through the Registry, including staff training hours and membership in the Registry (as required by rule). This portal is also being targeted as the method by which DCFS licensing representatives will send information back to the Registry regarding determination of staff qualifications.
- Launched a smartphone app designed to allow participants at Registry-approved conferences to scan and

automatically submit conference session/attendance data to the Registry. Once scanned, the session appears immediately on the individual's Professional Development Record (PDR). We plan to continue to develop the app and provide similar functionality to trainers and training agencies.

- Implemented online applications for the Great START (Strategy to Attract and Retain Teachers) wage supplement program, Gateways Scholarship Program, and all Gateways Credentials through the Registry Membership Portal.

The development of an Early Learning Council (ELC) dashboard will support the measurement of the Council's goals for children and families. Six indicators have been identified by the ELC as priorities for inclusion on the data dashboard:

- 1) Safe and Supportive Environments
- 2) Access to High Quality Learning for Infants and Toddlers
- 3) Access to High Quality Learning for Preschoolers
- 4) Health
- 5) Coordinated Community Systems
- 6) Kindergarten: Readiness for School

In late 2016, the dashboard went “live” and the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) project will be working throughout 2017 to populate all six indicators as data become available.

As part of our strategy to ensure data systems are able to generate usable information, Illinois has been working to articulate key research questions related to early childhood that might be answered, in part, with state data eventually to be made available through the ILDS. The Data, Research, and Evaluation committee of the Early Learning Council worked with other committees to develop and curate a research agenda which was publically posted on the OECD website in January 2016. Additionally, OECD staff has been working with local partners to ensure that the state has capacity to engage expert researchers in addressing key questions. For example, leaders from Participating State Agencies were invited to join a multi-year project of the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance, which will help to develop the capacity of Illinois stakeholders to use research in decision-making.

Data Tables

Commitment to early learning and development.

In the tables that follow, provide updated data on the State's commitment to early learning and development as demonstrated in Section A(1) of the State's RTT-ELC application. Tables A(1) -1 through 3 should be updated with current data. Tables 4 and 5 should provide data for the reporting year as well as previous years of the grant. Tables 6 and 7 may be updated only where significant changes have occurred (if no changes have occurred, you should note that fact).

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income¹ families, by age		
	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1	69,200	44.32%
Toddlers ages 1 through 2	139,178	44.32%
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry	177,434	44.32%
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families	386,012	44.32%

¹ Low-Income is defined as having an income of up to 200% of the Federal poverty rate.

Data Table A(1)-1 Data Notes

Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed.

Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), 2014 data, based on 5-year ACS 2010-2014. Poverty counts by age category are estimated by applying the total proportion defined as "low income" (44.32%) to the population count for each category.

Note: For children age 5 not yet in kindergarten, 1/2 the number of 5-year-olds was used. This number will vary depending on the month of the year from 1/12 of 5-year-olds to 12/12 of 5-year-olds. Thus the middle variation is used and one-half of 5 year olds are included in this count.

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs

The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs.

Special populations: Children who	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
Have disabilities or developmental delays ¹	53,171	6.1%
Are English learners ²	68,179	7.83%
Reside on "Indian Lands"	0	0%
Are migrant ³	424	0.01%
Are homeless ⁴	1,974	0.02%
Are in foster care	5,838	0.07%
Other 1 as identified by the State		
<i>Describe:</i>		
Other 2 as identified by the State		
<i>Describe:</i>		

¹For purposes of this Annual Performance Report, children with disabilities or developmental delays are defined as children birth through kindergarten entry that have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

²For purposes of this Annual Performance Report, children who are English learners are children birth through kindergarten entry who have home languages other than English.

³For purposes of this Annual Performance Report, children who are migrant are children birth through kindergarten entry who meet the definition of "migratory child" in ESEA section 1309(2).

⁴The term "homeless children" has the meaning given the term "homeless children and youths" in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (425 U.S.C. 11434a(2)).

Data Table A(1)-2 Data Notes

Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed.

Have disabilities or developmental delays: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois State Board of Education. They combine counts from IDEA Parts B and C, respectively.

English Learners: Data come from IECAM data, from IPUMS. They reflect the number of 0-5-year-olds who do not speak English at home and who speak English less than very well. For children younger than age 5, responses refer to mother's responses, if present; if not, then father's; if not, then guardian's.

Are migrant: Data come from Illinois Head Start Association. They refer to children in the Migrant Head Start program.

Are homeless: Data come from Illinois Head Start Association. They refer to children participating in either Head Start or Early Head Start programming.

Are in foster care: Data come from Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Percentages based on data provided by the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), 2014 data, based on the five-year American Community Survey, 2010-2014. For children age 5 not yet in kindergarten, 1/2 the number of 5-year-olds was used. This number will vary depending on the month of the year from 1/12 of 5-year-olds to 12/12 of 5-year-olds. Thus the middle variation is used.

Table (A)(1)-3a: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age				
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
State-funded preschool			73,118	73,118
<i>Specify:</i>	Preschool for All (for children ages 3-Kindergarten Entry)			
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	Illinois State Board of Education 2016			
Early Head Start and Head Start¹	2,904	8,425	35,603	47,505
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	2016 Program Information report (PIR); Includes IL Early Head Start, Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start			
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619	1,931	13,361	37,879	53,171
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	IL Dept of Human Services, 2014 for children two and under and IL State Board of Education, 2014 for children ages three to five. Unduplicated counts are not broken out for infants and toddlers; data for toddlers include children birth through age 2.			
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA		29	45,278	45,307
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	2014 IL Consolidated State Performance Report, Section 2.1.2.3. Unduplicated counts are not broken out for infants and toddlers; data for toddlers includes children birth through age 2.			
Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program	8,798	23,467	39,647	71,912
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	Illinois Department of Human Services, September 2016 CCAP reports			
Other 1		13,330		13,330
<i>Specify:</i>	Prevention Initiative			
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>	Illinois State Board of Education, 2016. Unduplicated counts are not broken out for infants and toddler; data for toddlers includes children birth through age 2.			
Other 2				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				
Other 3				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				
Other 4				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				
Other 5				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				

Table (A)(1)-3a - Additional Other rows

Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age				
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
Other 6				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				
Other 7	0			
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				
Other 8				
<i>Specify:</i>				
<i>Data Source and Year:</i>				

¹ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Data Table A(1)-3a Data Notes

Enter text here to clarify or explain any of these data if needed.

State-funded preschool: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education. They refer to preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry.

Early Head Start and Head Start: Data come from Illinois Head Start Association. They refer to children and/or pregnant mothers. The total includes 573 pregnant mothers. Counting these mothers enables the aggregation by race below. Also, cumulative enrollment includes children and pregnant mothers participating in Migrant Head Start programs.

Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services (Part C) and Illinois State Board of Education (Part B).

Programs funded under Title I of ESEA: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education.

Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. Infants under age 1 is a count from birth to 14 months. Toddlers ages 1 through 2 is a count from 15 to 36 months. Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry is a count from 37 months to 5 years.

Prevention Initiative: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education. They refer to toddler-aged participants in the Prevention Initiative program.

Table (A)(1)-3b: Participation of Children in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State, by Race/Ethnicity

Note: Totals are not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Number of Children							
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Hispanic Children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
State-funded preschool	22,418	164	2,680	16,088	101	3,105	28,652
<i>Specify:</i>	Preschool for All						
Early Head Start and Head Start¹	15,378	58	902	20,413	18	2,181	8,276
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	4,205	8	446	2,057	3	356	8,217
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	8,323	185	1,398	4,883	60	1,475	21,555
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA							
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program	28,372	67	1,556	61,178	0	5,759	17,757
Other 1	4,706	17	330	4,877	8	648	2,744
<i>Describe:</i>	Prevention Initiative (state funded for children birth through age three)						
Other 2							
<i>Describe:</i>							

¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-3b - Additional Other rows

Number of Children							
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Hispanic Children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
Other 3							
<i>Describe:</i>							
Other 4							
<i>Describe:</i>							
Other 5							
<i>Describe:</i>							
Other 6							
<i>Describe:</i>							
Other 7							
<i>Describe:</i>							
Other 8							
<i>Describe:</i>							

Data Table A(1)-3b Data Notes

Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed.

Early Head Start and Head Start: Data come from Illinois Head Start Association. They refer to children and/or pregnant mothers. The inclusion of pregnant mothers enables the aggregation by race. Also, the counts include participants in migrant or tribal programs. In addition, 165 and 114 children fell into Other and Unspecified categories, respectively, which are not included here.

Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services.

Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the CCDF program: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are September 2016 CCAP data.

Table (A)(1)-4: Data on funding for Early Learning and Development.

Note: For States that have a biennial State budget, please complete for all fiscal years for which State funds have been appropriated. We are not asking for forecasting, but for actual allocations. Therefore, States that do not have biennial budgets need not complete for years for which appropriations do not yet exist.

Funding for each Fiscal Year					
Type of investment	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start¹	\$731,298	\$700,048	\$793,714	0	\$744,713
State-funded preschool	\$300,192,400	\$300,192,400	\$293,438,100	\$314,238,100	\$393,738,100
<i>Specify:</i>	Early Childhood Block Grant includes Preschool for All 3-5 and Prevention Initiative 0-3				
State contributions to IDEA Part C	\$72,904,200	\$83,691,900	\$85,718,700	\$87,000,000	\$45,000,000
State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	\$17,308,047	\$16,488,199	\$16,488,210	\$16,488,219	\$17,188,363
Total State contributions to CCDF²	\$127,345,031	\$126,269,800	\$124,709,469	\$123,144,682	\$123,150,000
State match to CCDF Exceeded / Met / Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
<i>If exceeded, indicate amount by which match was exceeded</i>					
TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs³	\$134,482,223	\$139,402,852	\$133,834,598	\$155,412,155	\$156,000,000
Other State contributions 1	0	0	0	0	
<i>Specify:</i>	Even Start Programs (Title 1)				
Other State contributions 2	\$454,157,940	\$512,230,764	\$722,807,427	\$518,249,644	\$519,000,000
<i>Specify:</i>	Child Care GRF claimed for TANF MOE				
Other State contributions 3	\$35,254,798	\$34,137,675	\$34,084,574	\$29,820,964	\$30,424,055
<i>Specify:</i>	Infant Mortality/Family Case Mgmt GRF				
Other State contributions 4	\$8,240,341	\$8,358,158	\$8,195,105	\$6,588,130	\$1,538,790
<i>Specify:</i>	Healthy Families Illinois GRF				
Other State contributions 5	\$6,870,300	\$6,870,300	\$6,715,700	\$5,071,947	0
<i>Specify:</i>	Parents Too Soon				
Other State contributions 6	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
<i>Specify:</i>	Child Care GRF claimed for Title XX/SSB				

Table (A)(1)-4 - Additional Other rows

Funding for each Fiscal Year

Type of investment	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Other State contributions 7	\$29,557,764	\$35,062,808	\$43,840,732	\$41,194,538	\$41,200,000
<i>Specify:</i>	Other State spending in Child care not claimed as CCDF				
Other State contributions 8	\$83,572,255	\$85,643,680	\$82,193,224	\$81,268,504	\$81,500,000
<i>Specify:</i>	IDCFS (Foster care, adoption, protective services)				
Total State contributions:	\$1,271,816,597	\$1,342,694,694	\$1,554,019,553	\$1,380,508,379	\$1,311,995,658

¹ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

² Total State contributions to CCDF must include Maintenance of Effort (MOE), State Match, and any State contributions exceeding State MOE or Match.

³ Include TANF transfers to CCDF as well as direct TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs.

Data Table A(1)-4 Data Notes

Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data, including the State's fiscal year end date.

Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. Year Three sum of \$0 due to budget impasse. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/17.

State-funded preschool: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/17.

State contributions to IDEA Part C: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/17.

State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry: Fund Sources is IDEA Part B-Preschool Federal Grant Award (This is not the state contribution because we are not able to determine the specific amount that goes to preschool). Legislative reference--PL 108-446 Funding Source--Federal (CFDA 84. 173A)

Total State contributions to CCDF: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/17; the state match will be met.

TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 2: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from TANF claims. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 3: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from CARS. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 4: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from CARS. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 5: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from Parents Too Soon. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 6: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from Child Care GRF claims for Title XX/SSB. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 7: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services. They are sourced from CARS/CCTS reports. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Other State contributions 8: Data come from Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. They are sourced from IDCFS programming and budgeting. Year Four sum is budgeted, FY ending 6/30/2017.

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State

Note: Totals are not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs. However, the current year should match the program totals reported in Table (A)(1)-3a.

Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program¹					
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Baseline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
State-funded preschool (<i>annual census count; e.g., October 1 count</i>)	78,607	75,623	75,231	75,154	73,118
<i>Specify:</i>	Preschool for All				
Early Head Start and Head Start² (<i>funded enrollment</i>)	41,075	41,849	40,079	42,170	41,399
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 (<i>annual December 1 count</i>)	55,505	56,245	56,959	58,994	58,221
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA (<i>total number of children who receive Title I services annually, as reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report</i>)	30,856	34,123	28,764	45,307	44,271
Programs receiving CCDF funds (<i>average monthly served</i>)	115,188	107,170	135,873	93,483	71,912
Other 1	19,481	14,770	14,264	14,852	13,330
<i>Describe:</i>	Prevention Initiative, Healthy Families Initiative, Parents as Teachers and Nurse Family Partnership				
Other 2					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 3					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 4					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 5					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 6					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 7					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 8					
<i>Describe:</i>					

¹ Include all Children with High Needs served with both Federal dollars and State supplemental dollars.

² Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Data Table A(1)-5 Data Notes

Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed. Include current year if data are available.

State-funded preschool: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education.

Early Head Start and Head Start: Data come from Illinois Head Start Association.

Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services (Part C) and Illinois State Board of Education (Part B).

Programs funded under Title I of ESEA: Data come from Illinois State Board of Education. Year 4 data from 2015-16 Consolidated State Performance Report.

Programs receiving CCDF funds: Data come from Illinois Department of Human Services.

Table (A)(1)-6: Current status of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the State's Early Learning and Development Standards address the different age groups by Essential Domain of School Readiness.

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Age Groups		
	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Language and literacy development	X	X	X
Cognition and general knowledge (including early math and early scientific development)	X	X	X
Approaches toward learning	X	X	X
Physical well-being and motor development	X	X	X
Social and emotional development	X	X	X

Data Table A(1)-6 Notes

Enter text to explain or clarify information as needed.

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State.

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
State-funded preschool	X	X	X	X	
<i>Specify:</i>					
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X	X	X	X	
Programs receiving CCDF funds					
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements (Specify by tier)					
Tier 1					
Tier 2			X	X	
Tier 3	X	X	X	X	
Tier 4	X	X	X	X	
Tier 5					
State licensing requirements			X	X	
Other 1					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 2					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 3					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 4					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 5					
<i>Describe:</i>					
¹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.					

Table (A)(1)-7 - Additional Other rows

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
Other 6					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 7					
<i>Describe:</i>					
Other 8					
<i>Describe:</i>					

Data Table A(1)-7 Notes

Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data if needed.

Budget and Expenditures

Budget Summary Table Narrative

Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

Because of the extended expenditure time frame through 2017, as well as issues within specific projects, our spending is slightly delayed in several projects.

Budget Summary Table Explanation of Changes

Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to address underspending in some projects and to move funds between projects to ensure all projects are completed in a high quality manner.

Project Budget 1

Project Name: Grants Management

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

Our spending for Year Four was a bit delayed as we had four unexpected staff departures at OECD, which were not immediately replaced and caused a delay in spending. OECD has adjusted its staffing plan to ensure continuity of project management and full completion of the Scope of Work.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase funding in this project to account for our adjusted staffing plan to ensure funds are spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 2

Project Name: TQRIS Systems

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase the funding in this project to support QRIS application and renewal processing. The amendment will enable us to progress towards performance measures for program enrollment in the QRIS and to ensure funds are spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 3

Project Name: Quality Improvement

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted budget amendment to increase the amount in this project to support Early Learning and Development Programs to engage in continuous quality improvement activities. The amendment will ensure the funds are spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 4

Project Name: TQRIS Assessments

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to shift funds to Year Five of the project to accommodate a delay in funding due to the change in leadership at the state level that impacted the sub-grantee's ability to implement a set of tasks related to assessing school-based Head Start programs.

Project Budget 5

Project Name: Public Awareness of TQRIS

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase the amount in this project to support public awareness activities in Year Five. The amendment will ensure funds will be spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 6

Project Name: TQRIS Evaluation

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

There are no discrepancies between the approved budget and expenditures. Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

We do not anticipate any substantive changes; the budget amendment submitted by Illinois in January 2017 did not include any changes to the budget for this project.

Project Budget 7

Project Name: Community Supports

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to shift funds from Year Four to Year Five to accommodate the sub-grantee adjusting the timetable of their work. The amendment will ensure that all funds are spent completely and appropriately, and the scope of work will be completed.

Project Budget 8

Project Name: Gateways Registry

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase the amount in this project to continue processing credentials at a reduced-cost to professionals through the end of SFY 2017. This will enable Illinois to increase the number of credentialed professionals, which is a core strategy for sustaining an infrastructure that supports the early childhood workforce. The amendment will ensure funds are spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 9

Project Name: Professional Development

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. There was underspending in Year Four of this project. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase the amount in this project to further the work Illinois has done in increasing the number of credentialed early childhood professionals. These additional funds will enable the transition of credentials to a competency-based framework and provide concrete assistance to Institutions of Higher education to implement those frameworks. The funds will also enable the State to increase the number of credentialed teachers in priority areas as well as test strategies for overcoming barriers to credential attainment. The amendment will ensure the funds will be spent completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 10

Project Name: KIDS

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to increase the amount in this project. We overestimated the underspending for state fiscal Year Three (July 1 2015- June 30, 2016) and prematurely removed more from this budget in a September 2016 budget revision. The budget amendment will move funds back into this project to accurately reflect what was spent. We expect no major changes to Year Four or Year Five spending.

Project Budget 11

Project Name: Data Systems

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

There have been significant delays and scope changes within this project, contributing to cumulative underspending. In State Fiscal Year 2016, the Illinois State Board of Education executed a contract for work that was significantly less than what had been budgeted. Additionally, OECD discontinued a project with Chicago Public Schools, after reaching a mutual decision that the project would not be able to be executed within the allowable timeframe.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to decrease the amount of funding in this project. As previously stated, there was significant underspending, a discontinued project, and a contract that was executed for less than we had budgeted. The amendment will ensure that funds from this project will be moved to other projects to complete the scope of work in those projects completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 12

Project Name: Multi-state Partnership

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017.

In the fall of 2016, OECD consulted with its state partners, federal officer, and vendor and decided to discontinue this project.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to decrease the amount of funding in this project. As previously stated, this project has been discontinued, and these funds will be moved to other projects. The amendment will ensure that funds from this project will be moved to other projects to complete the scope of work in those projects completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 13

Project Name: Targeted High-Needs Communities

Project Budget Narrative

For this project, please provide an explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and expenditures for the reporting year.

Illinois received approval to budget based on the State's fiscal year, which begins on July 1st and ends June 30th. Illinois also received approval for a No-Cost Extension to address underspending in some projects and to ensure projects are completed in a high-quality manner. Therefore Year Four of the grant began on July 1, 2016 and ended December 31, 2016. Year Five of the grant began on January 1, 2017 and ends on December 31, 2017. Year Four expenditures in this project lagged behind projections, but it is anticipated that with approval, this project will be fully expended in Year Five.

Project Budget Explanation of Changes

For this project, please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State RTT-ELC budget in the upcoming year.

In January 2017, Illinois submitted a budget amendment to move funds from Year Four to Year Five. This shift will enable the completion of individualized sustainability plans for communities, development and dissemination of tools and resources, and completion of a bust multi-year evaluation. The amendment will ensure that funds from this project will be moved to other projects to complete the scope of work in those projects completely and appropriately.

Project Budget 14

Project Name: _____

***ILLINOIS RTT-ELC APPLICATION INCLUDED 13 PROJECTS.
PAGES 110-125 HAVE BEEN DELETED***