

Rhode Island



RHODE ISLAND WILL USE RTT-ELC FUNDING to build a more unified early childhood system that supports the healthy learning and development of all young children. Its Reform Plan builds on Rhode Island's strengths and pushes the state to take the next steps in building a high-quality early learning and development system that aligns work across state agencies and that leverages public and private resources to achieve outcomes for children. Rhode Island has already made significant advances to integrate and align resources and policies across state agencies, with its Early Learning Council and a cadre of early childhood partners such as RIAEYC/BrightStars, Ready to Learn Providence/The Providence Plan, and Rhode Island KIDS Count. Its overarching goal is to ensure that all children have the opportunity to experience high-quality early learning environments at home and in their community so that every child is on the path toward healthy development, beginning at birth, and so that every child enters kindergarten ready to succeed and is reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

Rhode Island will improve program quality statewide over the period of this grant by increasing participation in the tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS), increasing the number and percentage of programs meeting high-quality benchmarks (tiers 4 and 5), and increasing the number and percentage of programs meeting medium- and basic-quality benchmarks (tiers 2 and 3).

Rhode Island will improve the qualifications and effectiveness of the early learning workforce by increasing the number of early childhood educators progressing to higher levels of credentials that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF), increasing the number of early childhood educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions that are aligned with the WKCF, and increasing the number of early childhood educators receiving professional development aligned with the WKCF.

Applicant

Office of the Governor,
State of Rhode Island

Lead Agency

Rhode Island Department
of Elementary and
Secondary Education

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Total Federal Award

\$50,000,000

Grant Period

January 1, 2012 –
December 31, 2015

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) discretionary grant program supports states in building statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Information in this abstract is drawn from the state's RTT-ELC grant application.

Rhode Island will improve child outcomes statewide by implementing a cross-departmental, shared early learning data system that includes all of the essential elements and is fully integrated with the state longitudinal data system and KIDSNET, the state's universal health and development database. Rhode Island will also have a statewide formative child assessment system to track children's development and learning from birth to kindergarten entry.

Rhode Island will close the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers at kindergarten entry by implementing a cross-departmental, shared early learning data system, which will enable the state to better identify children with high needs, ages birth to kindergarten entry, to track participation in early learning programs, and to monitor children's development. Rhode Island will also identify, pilot, and begin to implement a statewide comprehensive kindergarten entry assessment to measure the status of children's knowledge and skills at kindergarten entry. Rhode Island will use the early learning data system and kindergarten readiness assessment to ensure that specific populations of children with high needs are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs and to address the readiness gap for children in specific populations.

Rhode Island addressed the following Focused Investment Areas in its application:

*Early Learning
and
Development
Standards*

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide high-quality early learning and development standards. Rhode Island has established comprehensive, high-quality professional development and technical assistance opportunities for early childhood educators and programs in using the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards (for ages 3 to 5). Rhode Island has also developed mechanisms for certifying and supporting the individuals who provide the training and technical assistance to ensure consistent and rigorous implementation. Rhode Island will develop early learning standards for B-3 year olds and will revise its existing standards to align with the Common Core State Standards. Professional development and technical assistance supports will also be revised and expanded.

*Comprehensive
Assessment
System*

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems. Rhode Island already has a framework to ensure that all children, birth through age 5, have access to regular developmental screening. A comprehensive formative assessment tool is used in all early childhood preschool special education classrooms and state-funded pre-kindergarten classrooms. Classroom quality assessment tools are already in use, and the state has started using tools that look more specifically at teacher-child interactions in language development and literacy, mathematics, and science instruction.

*Establish
Workforce
Knowledge and
Competency
Framework*

(D)(1) Developing a workforce knowledge and competency framework and a progression of credentials and D(2) Supporting early childhood educators. In the past year, Rhode Island has completed a draft titled *Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Teachers and Teacher Assistants* and has developed a plan for implementing a comprehensive professional

development system. RTT-ELC funds will support the development of workforce knowledge and competency frameworks (WKCFs) for additional sectors of the early learning workforce, as well as high-quality professional development aligned with the WKCFs.

*Kindergarten
Entry
Assessment*

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children at kindergarten entry. The Rhode Island Early Learning Council approved a set of preliminary recommendations for the development of a kindergarten entry assessment in 2011. RTT-ELC funds will ensure that the current work moves beyond research and planning to support the effective implementation of a kindergarten entry assessment, first as a pilot in several communities and then phased in statewide.

*Build or
Enhance Data
Systems*

(E)(2) Building an early learning data system. Rhode Island has a clear plan for the development of a comprehensive early learning data system that will be fully integrated with the statewide longitudinal data system and KIDSNET. A comprehensive data system will build upon Rhode Island's already significant data sets for young children and enable the state to gather data to inform instruction, plan policy, and better understand the early learning access and quality issues for different populations of children. Rhode Island will use a unique child identifier in order to link early learning data bases with the State's P-20 longitudinal data system.

Rhode Island has 26,714 children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families. The state reports that it is leveraging \$104,262,681 in other funding sources to support this effort.