



**Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge
Application for Initial Funding
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GEORGIA

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**APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING UNDER
RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE**

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Dear Colleague:

On May 25, 2011, we announced a new \$500 million State-level grant competition, the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). Since that time, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services have awarded RTT-ELC grants to fourteen States to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs.

Today, we are releasing the final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria for a new RTT-ELC competition, along with the application. We have endeavored to maintain consistency with the 2011 competition, making only small changes to improve clarity and effectiveness of the program. Just as in the first competition, we challenge States to build a coordinated system of early learning and development that ensures that many more children from low-income families and disadvantaged children, from birth to age five, have access to dramatically improved early learning and development programs and are able to start kindergarten with a strong foundation for future learning.

This competition represents an unprecedented opportunity for States to focus deeply on their birth through five early learning and development systems and build a more unified approach to supporting young children and their families — one that increases access and quality and helps ensure that children enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful. The RTT-ELC competition will provide incentives and supports to States that commit to and deliver high-quality early learning and development programs statewide and improve outcomes for children.

The priorities and selection criteria aim to establish a comprehensive approach that better coordinates, implements, and evaluates high-quality early learning and development programs with a focus on giving families the information and support they need to encourage their child's development and learning and to select the best program for their child.

In the last two years, RTT-ELC has been a catalyst for a vigorous national dialogue about how best to reform early learning and development programs and make sure that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life. This year in his State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool to every child in America. As part of that effort, the President will propose a series of new investments that will establish a continuum of high-quality early learning for a child – beginning at birth and continuing to age 5. By doing so, the President would invest critical resources where we know the return on our dollar is the highest: in our youngest children.

We are heartened by and grateful for your participation thus far, and will continue having transparent and candid dialogues about early learning. Together, we can improve the capacity of all States to improve early learning programs for high-need children.

Sincerely,

/s/

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education,
U.S. Department of Education.

/s/

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families,
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Every dollar we invest in high-quality early childhood education can save more than seven dollars later on -- by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime. In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children, ... studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let’s give our kids that chance.” (President Obama, State of Union Address, February 12, 2013)

A critical focus of the Obama Administration is supporting America’s youngest learners and helping ensure that children, especially young children with high needs, such as those who are low-income, English learners, and children with disabilities or developmental delays, enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life. A robust body of research demonstrates that high-quality early learning and development programs and services can improve young children’s health, social emotional and cognitive outcomes, enhance school readiness, and help close the wide school readiness gap^{1 2} that exists between children with high needs and their peers at the time they enter kindergarten.^{3 4}

To address these educational gaps, the Administration has identified, as high priorities, strengthening the quality of early learning and development programs and increasing access to high-quality early learning programs for all children, including those with high needs. This commitment to early education is reflected in the RTT-ELC competition that we are announcing in the Notice Inviting Applications (the notice).

On April 16, 2013 Secretaries Duncan and Sebelius announced the RTT-ELC, a \$300 million State-level grant competition to be held in 2013 and authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), as amended by section 1832(b) of the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011, and the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2012 (Title III of the Division F of P.L. 112-74, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012). The Departments are administering this competition jointly. At its core, RTT-ELC demonstrates a strong commitment by the Administration to stimulate a national effort to make sure all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

¹ Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. Teachers College Record, 112(3), 579-620.

² Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Ou, S., Arteaga, I.A., & White, B.A.B. (2011). School-based early childhood education and age-28 well-being: effects by timing, dosage, and subgroups. Science, Retrieved from <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/early/2011/06/08/science.1203618.abstract> doi: 10.1126/science.1203618

³ Princiotta, D., Flanagan, K. D., and Germino Hausken, E. (2006). Fifth Grade: Findings From The Fifth-Grade Follow-up of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K). (NCES 2006-038) U.S. Department of Education.

⁴ Halle, T., Forry, N., Hair, E., Perper, K., Wandner, L., Wessel, J., & Vick, J.(2009). Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

Through the RTT-ELC, the Administration seeks to help close the educational gaps between children with high needs and their peers by supporting State efforts to build strong systems of early learning and development that provide increased access to high-quality programs for the children who need it most. This competition represents an opportunity for States to focus deeply on their early learning and development systems for children from birth through age five. It is an opportunity to build a more unified approach to supporting young children and their families--an approach that increases access to high-quality early learning and development programs and services, and helps ensure that children enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions toward learning they need to be successful.

The RTT-ELC competition does not create new early learning and development programs, nor is it a vehicle for maintenance of the status quo. Rather, the RTT-ELC program will support States that demonstrate their commitment to integrating and aligning resources and policies across all of the State agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development. It will further provide incentives to the States that commit to and implement high-quality early learning and development programs statewide.

Current State early learning and development systems

Many early learning and development programs and services co-exist within States, including Head Start/Early Head Start programs, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program (pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.)), State-funded preschool, programs authorized under section 619 of part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and part C of IDEA, and other State and locally supported programs. Each of these programs has its own funding stream and accompanying requirements, standards, expectations, policies, and procedures. Each also has its own unique strengths and makes unique contributions to young children and their families. For States, the challenges to be addressed by RTT-ELC are to sustain and build on the strengths of these programs, acknowledge and appreciate their differences, reduce inefficiency, improve quality, and ultimately deliver a coordinated set of services and experiences that support young children's success in school and beyond.

The RTT-ELC vision for State early learning and development systems

Through the RTT-ELC competition, we intend to fund applications that demonstrate a State's commitment and capacity to building a statewide system that raises the quality of early learning and development programs so that all children receive the support they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. A commitment to building school readiness for children entering kindergarten is at the heart of this competition.

The bar to receive an RTT-ELC grant will be high. RTT-ELC is organized around five key areas of reform. These five key areas represent the foundation of an effective early learning and development reform agenda that is focused on school readiness and ongoing academic success. They are central to this competition's priorities, requirements, and selection criteria, and are as follows:

- (A) Successful State Systems;

- (B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs;
- (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children;
- (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and
- (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress.

The first two of these, (A) and (B), are core areas of focus for this competition. As such, they are referred to throughout the notice as “Core Areas,” and applicants are required to respond to all selection criteria under these Core Areas. The reform areas in (C), (D), and (E) are areas where applicants will direct targeted attention to specific activities that are relevant to their State’s context. In the notice, we refer to these areas as “Focused Investment Areas,” and applicants are required to address each Focused Investment Area but not all of the selection criteria under them. A discussion of the five key areas of reform follows.

A. Successful State Systems

Successful State early learning and development systems are built on broad-based stakeholder participation and effective governance structures. They are guided by clearly articulated goals and strategies designed to deliver a coordinated set of programs, policies, and services that are responsive to the needs of children and families and effectively prepare young children for school success. The RTT-ELC Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 competition will support States that demonstrate a commitment to creating and implementing a successful statewide early learning and development system and that effectively organize and align that system to provide the diversity of services and supports needed by children and families. Such a system can provide continuity and consistent levels of quality across delivery mechanisms and levels of care and education. Thus, under the priorities established for this competition, States must propose and implement ambitious plans for successful State systems of early learning and development that will have broad impact and can--

- Improve program quality and outcomes for young children;
- Increase the number of children with high needs attending high-quality early learning and development programs; and
- Help close the achievement gap between children with high needs and their peers by supporting efforts to increase kindergarten readiness.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

The RTT-ELC competition will support States that develop a common set of program standards used statewide. This will help align programs such as Head Start, CCDF, IDEA, and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), and State-funded preschool to create a more unified statewide system of early learning and development. In addition, each State grantee must design and implement a tiered quality rating and improvement system that is based on consistent and demanding statewide program standards and that establishes meaningful program ratings. RTT-ELC promotes broad participation in the State’s tiered quality rating and improvement system across a range of programs, active program improvement, and the

publication of program ratings so that families can make informed decisions about which programs can best serve the needs of their children.

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

The RTT-ELC competition is based on the premise that effective programs and services for young children must be built on a set of early learning and development standards that define what children should know and be able to do at different stages of development. These standards provide guidelines, articulate developmental milestones, and set expectations for the healthy growth and development of young children. This competition rewards States that will implement high-quality early learning and development standards and comprehensive systems of assessments aligned with these standards. The implementation of these standards and assessments will ensure that early childhood educators have the information they need to understand and support young children's growth and development across a broad range of domains so that significantly more young children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Improving early learning and development outcomes also requires that children are healthy and supported by their families. Services that address health and family supports are thus critical, and health and family engagement are key elements in high-quality early learning and development programs. RTT-ELC is designed to support States that focus on increasing access to quality programs and services that promote health and engage families in the care and education of their young children.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

In early learning and development settings, nothing matters more to children's success than the adults caring for and teaching them, and the RTT-ELC FY 2013 competition acknowledges the importance of a strong early childhood workforce. Ensuring that children are ready for success in kindergarten depends on well-trained adults who have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively support the learning and development of every child. Thus, the competition will reward States that work closely with postsecondary institutions and other parties to define a set of workforce competencies that are tied to the State's early learning and development standards. Further, the competition encourages States to increase retention and improve educator quality by supporting their workforce with professional development, career advancement opportunities, differentiated compensation, and incentives to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Collecting, organizing, and understanding evidence of young children's progress across a range of domains is essential to ensuring that early learning and development programs are of high quality and that they meet the needs of every child. States are therefore encouraged to implement comprehensive data systems and to use the data to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. In addition, through both a selection criterion and a competitive preference priority, States will be rewarded for implementing kindergarten entry assessments statewide that provide information across all domains of early learning and development, inform efforts to close the school readiness gap, and inform instruction in the early elementary school grades.

By organizing this program around the five key reform areas described in this section, the RTT-ELC FY 2013 competition will help lead the way for States to challenge and rethink the status quo. Not every State will receive an RTT-ELC award through this competition, but every State can use this competition as an opportunity to commit to comprehensively strengthening its early learning and development system and ensuring that more children, including those with high needs, have access to high-quality early learning and development programs and services.

II. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Background Information

Before you begin work on your RTT-ELC application, it may be helpful to understand the parts of the application. Each of these is described below.

- Requirements:
 - Eligibility requirements specify what applicants must have in place in order to compete for a grant. Staff from the Education Department (“ED”) and the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) will make the eligibility determination.
 - Application requirements list the elements that must be included in a complete application.
 - Program requirements specify what applicants must do if they win a grant (e.g., reporting, participating in technical assistance activities, publishing findings).
- Definitions set forth the meaning of critical terms in the notice; defined terms are indicated by initial capitalization.
- Priorities:
 - An absolute priority is a priority that all applicants must address fully in order to win; these will be assessed by peer reviewers as either “yes” or “no.” If an applicant does not meet the competition’s absolute priority, it will not be awarded a grant.
 - A competitive preference priority is one that earns the applicant extra, or “competitive preference,” points.
 - An invitational priority is one that will not be scored, but is of interest to the Secretaries. If an applicant addresses an invitational priority, then the applicant may apply funds from the grant, if awarded, to work associated with this priority.
- Selection criteria are the focal point of the application and the peer review. Applicants write narrative responses to these criteria, and reviewers judge their responses. Selection criteria in this competition may be supplemented by—
 - Evidence, including data tables and additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers; and
 - Performance measures, or data-driven indicators that States complete to define the outcomes they expect to deliver under the grant.
- Finally, scoring rubrics list the maximum number of points that can be earned for each selection criterion and competitive priority; in addition, they include other instructions that reviewers will follow when judging applications. All rubrics that will be provided to reviewers are included in this application, for the applicant’s information.

About the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Application

The RTT-ELC application asks you to address a variety of areas. There are two Core Areas that you must address: (A) Successful State Systems and (B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs. In addition, there are three Focused Investment Areas that address: (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children; (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce;

and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress. Within these three Focused Investment Areas, you must select and address--

- Two or more selection criteria within Focused Investment Area: (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children; and
- One or more selection criteria within each of the Focused Investment Areas: (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress.

Page Length Recommendations

Within the application, you will notice that there is a recommended page length for your response to each selection criterion; these are indicated in the application narrative box associated with each selection criterion. While you are not required to abide by these page limits, reviewers generally prefer brevity.

We recommend that you limit your total page count (that is, the narrative responses to all selection criteria in section VI) to no more than 150 pages of State-authored text, and that you limit your appendices to no more than an additional 150 pages. For all responses, we request that the following standards be used:

- A “page” is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.
- Number each page.
- Set the line spacing for the narratives to 1.5 spacing, and use a 12 point Times New Roman font.

We strongly request that you follow the recommended page limits, although the Secretaries will consider applications of greater length.

Writing Application Responses

The application provides space for you to address the selection criteria and priorities.

Selection Criteria

Each selection criterion may have multiple parts: the narrative, evidence (often including data tables), and performance measures. Not all selection criteria contain all of these pieces.

- **Narrative:** All selection criteria include a narrative section. This is where you write your response to the criterion. Please type your narrative in the text box provided in this application.
- **Evidence:** Some selection criteria ask you to provide specific evidence; this is indicated in the application. You may provide additional evidence for any criterion if you think it will help reviewers evaluate your application. Keep in mind that too much additional information could have the effect of distracting the reviewers from what is critical.

You must provide the evidence as part of your narrative response to the selection criterion, or include it as an attachment in the Appendix. If you put it in an Appendix, you must provide a clear reference to the Appendix within your narrative.

- **Tables:** Many selection criteria ask you to provide specific evidence in data tables; these tables are included in the application immediately following the narrative. The tables provide you with a framework for presenting information and provide reviewers with a consistent way to look at this information. You must complete the tables as part of your response. Feel free to provide additional data, in the form of graphs, tables, or diagrams, if it will help reviewers understand critical facts about your State. You may use the narrative to explain and describe the significance of the data as it relates to your State Plan.
- **Performance measures:** Several selection criteria ask applicants to provide performance measures, generally including baseline data and annual targets for key outcomes the State will deliver over the term of the grant. Tables for the requested performance measures are included in the application immediately following the narrative and data tables (if any). In addition, you may provide additional performance measures, baseline data, and targets for any criteria you choose. Peer reviewers will consider, as part of their evaluation of a State’s application, the extent to which the State has set “ambitious yet achievable” annual targets; the State will be held accountable for achieving these targets, should it win a grant.

Note: If your State does not have data that are requested in the data tables or in the baseline performance measures, indicate “not available” in the table. Use your narrative to provide any additional explanation that may be necessary to make your point.

Appendix

Your application will include an Appendix. The Appendix must begin with a complete Table of Contents that provides reviewers with easy access to any attachment they are looking for. Each attachment in the Appendix must be described in the narrative associated with the relevant selection criterion, together with a rationale for how its inclusion supports the State Plan. Please also include in the narrative a cross-reference to the attachment’s location in the Appendix.

Competition Priorities

The RTT-ELC competition also includes absolute, competitive, and invitational priorities. You must address the absolute priority throughout the application; you do not write a separate response to this priority. The absolute priority must be met in order for an applicant to receive funding.

A State that chooses to address a competitive preference priority may earn extra points under that priority. Follow the instructions associated with each competitive priority that you choose to address. A State may address either one, two, three or all four of the competitive preference priorities.

Invitational priorities extend the scope or reach of the application; applicants are invited to address the invitational priority and apply funds from this grant to it, but do not earn additional points for doing so.

The competition priorities can be found in section VII of the application. Responding to the competitive and invitational priorities is optional.

Competition Description and Scoring Rubric

For information on the competition review and selection process, see (a) the section entitled, Review and Selection Process, in the notice; and (b) section XIV, Scoring Rubric in the application (Appendix B in the notice). In addition, point values have been included throughout the application.

Technical Assistance Planning Workshops

To assist States in preparing their applications and to respond to questions, ED and HHS intend to host a Pre-Application Webinar on September 4, 2013 and a Planning Workshop on September 10, 2013. In these sessions, the Departments will provide potential applicants with an orientation to the application.

Frequently Asked Questions: The Departments will also prepare answers to frequently asked questions, in order to assist States as they complete their applications. These questions and answers will be posted on the RTT-ELC Web site at www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge. We may update the document as needed throughout the competition, so please check the website regularly.

III. DEFINITIONS

Note: All definitions below are taken from the notice.

Children with High Needs means children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from Low-Income families or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on “Indian lands” as that term is defined by section 8013(7) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA); who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.

Common Education Data Standards (CEDs) means voluntary, common standards for a key set of education data elements (e.g., demographics, program participation, transition, course information) at the early learning, K-12, and postsecondary levels developed through a national collaborative effort being led by the National Center for Education Statistics. CEDs focus on standard definitions, code sets, and technical specifications of a subset of key data elements and are designed to increase data interoperability, portability, and comparability across Early Learning and Development Programs and agencies, States, local educational agencies, and postsecondary institutions.

Comprehensive Assessment System means a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments, each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used, that organizes information about the process and context of young children’s learning and development in order to help Early Childhood Educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions and that conforms to the recommendations of the National Research Council reports on early childhood.

A Comprehensive Assessment System includes, at a minimum--

- (a) Screening Measures;
- (b) Formative Assessments;
- (c) Measures of Environmental Quality; and
- (d) Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions.

Data System Oversight Requirements means policies for ensuring the quality, privacy, and integrity of data contained in a data system, including—

(a) A data governance policy that identifies the elements that are collected and maintained; provides for training on internal controls to system users; establishes who will have access to the data in the system and how the data may be used; sets appropriate internal controls to restrict access to only authorized users; sets criteria for determining the legitimacy of data requests; establishes processes that verify the accuracy, completeness, and age of the data elements maintained in the system; sets procedures for determining the sensitivity of each inventoried element and the risk of harm if those data were improperly disclosed; and establishes procedures for disclosure review and auditing; and

(b) A transparency policy that informs the public, including families, Early Childhood Educators, and programs, of the existence of data systems that house personally identifiable information, explains what data elements are included in such a system, enables parental consent

to disclose personally identifiable information as appropriate, and describes allowable and potential uses of the data.

Early Childhood Educator means any professional working in an Early Learning and Development Program, including but not limited to center-based and family child care providers; infant and toddler specialists; early intervention specialists and early childhood special educators; home visitors; related services providers; administrators such as directors, supervisors, and other early learning and development leaders; Head Start teachers; Early Head Start teachers; preschool and other teachers; teacher assistants; family service staff; and health coordinators.

Early Learning and Development Program means any (a) State-licensed or State-regulated program or provider, regardless of setting or funding source, that provides early care and education for children from birth to kindergarten entry, including, but not limited to, any program operated by a child care center or in a family child care home; (b) preschool program funded by the Federal Government or State or local educational agencies (including any IDEA-funded program); (c) Early Head Start and Head Start program; and (d) a non-relative child care provider who is not otherwise regulated by the State and who regularly cares for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting. A State should include in this definition other programs that may deliver early learning and development services in a child's home, such as the MIECHV; Early Head Start; and Part C of IDEA.⁵

Early Learning and Development Standards means a set of expectations, guidelines, or developmental milestones that—

- (a) Describe what all children from birth to kindergarten entry should know and be able to do and their disposition toward learning;
- (b) Are appropriate for each age group (e.g., infants, toddlers, and preschoolers); for English learners; and for children with disabilities or developmental delays;
- (c) Cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness; and
- (d) Are universally designed and developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

Early Learning Intermediary Organization means a national, statewide, regional, or community-based organization that represents one or more networks of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State and that has influence or authority over them. Such Early Learning Intermediary Organizations include, but are not limited to, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; State Head Start Associations; Family Child Care Associations; State affiliates of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; State affiliates of the

⁵ Note: Such home-based programs and services will most likely not participate in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System unless the State has developed a set of tiered Program Standards specifically for home-based programs and services.

Council for Exceptional Children’s Division of Early Childhood; statewide or regional union affiliates that represent Early Childhood Educators; affiliates of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association; the National Tribal, American Indian, and Alaskan Native Head Start Association; and the National Indian Child Care Association.

Essential Data Elements means the critical child, program, and workforce data elements of a coordinated early learning data system, including—

- (a) A unique statewide child identifier or another highly accurate, proven method to link data on that child, including Kindergarten Entry Assessment data, to and from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and the coordinated early learning data system (if applicable);
- (b) A unique statewide Early Childhood Educator identifier;
- (c) A unique program site identifier;
- (d) Child and family demographic information, including indicators identifying the criteria that States use to determine whether a child is a Child with High Needs;
- (e) Early Childhood Educator demographic information, including data on educational attainment and State credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information;
- (f) Program-level data on the program’s structure, quality, child suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, work environment, and all applicable data reported as part of the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
- (g) Child-level program participation and attendance data.

Essential Domains of School Readiness means the domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills), and social and emotional development.

Formative Assessment (also known as a classroom-based or ongoing assessment) means assessment questions, tools, and processes—

- (a) That are—
 - (1) Specifically designed to monitor children’s progress in meeting the Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (2) Valid and reliable for their intended purposes and their target populations; and
 - (3) Linked directly to the curriculum; and
- (b) The results of which are used to guide and improve instructional practices.

High-Quality Plan means any plan developed by the State to address a selection criterion or priority in this notice that is feasible and has a high probability of successful implementation and at a minimum includes—

- (a) The key goals;
- (b) The key activities to be undertaken; the rationale for the activities; and, if applicable, where in the State the activities will be initially implemented, and where and how they will be scaled up over time to eventually achieve statewide implementation;
- (c) A realistic timeline, including key milestones, for implementing each key activity;
- (d) The party or parties responsible for implementing each activity and other key personnel assigned to each activity;
- (e) Appropriate financial resources to support successful implementation of the plan;
- (f) The information requested as supporting evidence, if any, together with any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers in judging the credibility of the plan;
- (g) The information requested in the performance measures, where applicable;
- (h) How the State will address the needs of the different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, if applicable; and
- (i) How the State will meet the needs of Children with High Needs.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment means an assessment that--

- (a) Is administered to children during the first few months of their admission into kindergarten;
- (b) Covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (c) Is used in conformance with the recommendations of the National Research Council⁶ reports on early childhood; and
- (d) Is valid and reliable for its intended purposes and for the target populations and aligned to the Early Learning and Development Standards.

⁶ National Research Council. (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C.E. Snow and S.B. Van Hemel, Editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12446.

Results of the assessment should be used to inform efforts to close the school readiness gap at kindergarten entry, to inform instruction in the early elementary school grades, and to inform parents about their children's status and involve them in decisions about their children's education. This assessment must not be used to prevent children's entry into kindergarten or as a single measure for high-stakes decisions.

Lead Agency means the State-level agency designated by the Governor for the administration of the RTT-ELC grant; this agency is the fiscal agent for the grant. The Lead Agency must be one of the Participating State Agencies.

Low-Income means having an income of up to 200 percent of the Federal poverty rate.

Measures of Environmental Quality means valid and reliable indicators of the overall quality of the early learning environment.

Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions means the measures obtained through valid and reliable processes for observing how teachers and caregivers interact with children, where such processes are designed to promote child learning and to identify strengths of and areas for improvement for early learning professionals.
Participating Program means an Early Learning and Development Program that elects to carry out activities described in the State Plan.

Participating State Agency means a State agency that administers public funds related to early learning and development and is participating in the State Plan. The following State agencies are required Participating State Agencies: the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of CCDF, the section 619 of Part B of IDEA and Part C of IDEA programs, State-funded preschool, home visiting, Title I of ESEA, the Head Start State Collaboration Grant, and the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the State's Child Care Licensing Agency, and the State educational agency. Other State agencies, such as the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of Child Welfare, Mental Health, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, may be Participating State Agencies if they elect to participate in the State Plan as well as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Program Standards means the standards that serve as the basis for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and define differentiated levels of quality for Early Learning and Development Programs. Program Standards are expressed, at a minimum, by the extent to which--

(a) Early Learning and Development Standards are implemented through evidence-based activities, interventions, or curricula that are appropriate for each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers;

(b) Comprehensive Assessment Systems are used routinely and appropriately to improve instruction and enhance program quality by providing robust and coherent evidence of—

(1) Children’s learning and development outcomes; and

(2) Program performance;

(c) A qualified workforce improves young children’s health, social, emotional, and educational outcomes;

(d) Culturally and linguistically responsive strategies are successfully used to engage families, help them build protective factors, and strengthen their capacity to support their children’s development and learning. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and adult and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development;

(e) Health promotion practices include health and safety requirements; developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow up; and the promotion of physical activity, healthy eating habits, oral health and behavioral health, and health literacy among parents; and

(f) Effective data practices include gathering Essential Data Elements and entering them into the State’s Statewide Longitudinal Data System or other early learning data system, using these data to guide instruction and program improvement, and making this information readily available to families.

Screening Measures means age and developmentally appropriate, valid, and reliable instruments that are used to identify children who may need follow-up services to address developmental, learning, or health needs in, at a minimum, the areas of physical health, behavioral health, oral health, child development, vision, and hearing.

State means any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

State Plan means the plan submitted as part of the State’s RTT-ELC application.

Statewide Longitudinal Data System means the State’s longitudinal education data system that collects and maintains detailed, high-quality, student- and staff-level data that are linked across entities and that over time provide a complete academic and performance history for each student. The Statewide Longitudinal Data System is typically housed within the State educational agency but includes or can be connected to early childhood, postsecondary, and labor data.

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System means the system through which the State uses a set of progressively higher Program Standards to evaluate the quality of an Early Learning and Development Program and to support program improvement. A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System consists of four components: (a) tiered Program Standards with multiple rating categories that clearly and meaningfully differentiate program quality levels;

(b) monitoring to evaluate program quality based on the Program Standards; (c) supports to help programs meet progressively higher standards (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial support); and (d) program quality ratings that are publically available; and includes a process for validating the system.

Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework means a set of expectations that describes what Early Childhood Educators (including those working with children with disabilities and English learners) should know and be able to do. The Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, at a minimum, (a) is evidence based; (b) incorporates knowledge and application of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, child development, health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families; (c) includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children; (d) incorporates effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement; (e) includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social and emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors; (f) incorporates feedback from experts at the State's postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators; and (g) includes knowledge of protective factors and effective approaches to partnering with families and building families' knowledge, skills, and capacity to promote children's health and development.

IV. APPLICATION ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS**
Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge
(CFDA No. 84.412)

Legal Name of Applicant (Office of the Governor): State of Georgia, Office of the Governor	Applicant’s Mailing Address: 203 State Capitol Atlanta, GA 30334																								
Employer Identification Number: 58-0973190	Organizational DUNS: 069230183																								
Lead Agency: Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Contact Name: Bobby Cagle, Commissioner (Single point of contact for communication)	Lead Agency Contact Phone: 404-651-7432 Lead Agency Contact Email Address: bobby.cagle@dec.al.ga.gov																								
<p>Required Applicant Signatures (Must include signatures from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency. Insert additional signature blocks as needed below. To simplify the process, signatories may sign on separate Application Assurance forms.):</p> <p>To the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information and data in this application are true and correct.</p> <p>I further certify that I have read the application, am fully committed to it, and will support its implementation:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name):</td> <td>Telephone:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor</td> <td>404-463-9403</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor:</td> <td>Date:</td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Lead Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):</td> <td>Agency Name: Bright from the</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bobby Cagle, Commissioner</td> <td>Start: Georgia Department of</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signature of Lead Agency Authorized Representative:</td> <td>Early Care and Learning</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Date:</td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):</td> <td>Agency Name: Head Start State</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Janice Haker, Director</td> <td>Collaboration Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:</td> <td>Date:</td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):</td> <td>Agency Name: Georgia</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr. John Barge, State Superintendent of Schools</td> <td>Department of Education</td> </tr> </table>		Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name):	Telephone:	The Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor	404-463-9403	Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor:	Date:	Lead Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):	Agency Name: Bright from the	Bobby Cagle, Commissioner	Start: Georgia Department of	Signature of Lead Agency Authorized Representative:	Early Care and Learning		Date:	Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):	Agency Name: Head Start State	Janice Haker, Director	Collaboration Office	Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:	Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):	Agency Name: Georgia	Dr. John Barge, State Superintendent of Schools	Department of Education
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Dr. John Barge, State Superintendent of Schools	Department of Education																								

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Keith Horton, Commissioner	Agency Name: Georgia Department of Human Services
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, MD, Commissioner	Agency Name: Georgia Department of Public Health
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Katie Jo Ballard	Agency Name: Governor's Office for Children and Families
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Ronald W. Jackson, Commissioner	Agency Name: Technical College System of Georgia
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Kelly Henson, Executive Secretary	Agency Name: Georgia Professional Standards Commission
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Martha Ann Todd, Executive Director	Agency Name: Governor's Office of Student Achievement
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Teya Ryan, President and Executive Director	Agency Name: Georgia Public Broadcasting
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:

State of Georgia: Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Application

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Gretchen Corbin, Commissioner	Agency Name: Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Hank Huckaby, Chancellor	Agency Name: Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Pat Wilson, Chief Operating Officer	Agency Name: Georgia Department of Economic Development
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Amy Mast, Director	Agency Name: Georgia Alliance of Education Agency Heads
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Gaye Morris Smith, Executive Director	Agency Name: Georgia Family Connection Partnership
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:
Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name): Katie Jo Ballard, Co-Chair	Agency Name: Georgia Children's Cabinet
Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:	Date:

**** NOTE: As per grant guidelines, this table with original signatures is contained on the CDs on which the application is downloaded.**

State Attorney General Certification

State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General Certification

I certify that the State's description of, and statements and conclusions in its application concerning, State law, statute, and regulation are complete and accurate, and constitute a reasonable interpretation of State law, statute, and regulation:

State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General (Printed Name): Telephone:

Signature of the State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General : Date:

Accountability, Transparency, and Reporting Assurances

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures that the State will comply with all applicable assurances in OMB Standard Forms 424B and D (Assurances for Non-Construction and Construction Programs), including the assurances relating to the legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards, including Davis-Bacon prevailing wages; flood hazards; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and the general agreement to comply with all applicable Federal laws, executive orders, and regulations.

- With respect to the certification regarding lobbying in Department Form 80-0013, no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; the State will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix B); and the State will require the full certification, as set forth in 34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.
- The State and other entities will comply with the following provisions of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), as applicable: 34 CFR Part 74 -- Administration of Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations; 34 CFR Part 76 -- State-Administered Programs, including the construction requirements in section 75.600 through 75.617 that are incorporated by reference in section 76.600; 34 CFR Part 77 -- Definitions that Apply to Department Regulations; 34 CFR Part 80 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, including the procurement provisions; 34 CFR Part 81 -- General Education Provisions Act—Enforcement; 34 CFR Part 82 -- New Restrictions on Lobbying; and with the debarment and suspension regulations found at 2 CFR Part 3485.

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name): Nathan Deal, Governor	
Signature:	Date:

V. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The State must meet the following requirements to be eligible to compete for funding under this program:

(a) The State has not previously received an RTT-ELC grant.

(b) The Lead Agency must have executed with each Participating State Agency a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other binding agreement that the State must attach to its application, describing the Participating State Agency’s level of participation in the grant. (See section XIII.) At a minimum, the MOU or other binding agreement must include an assurance that the Participating State Agency agrees to use, to the extent applicable--

- (1) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A set of statewide Program Standards;
- (3) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
- (4) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

List of Participating State Agencies:

The applicant should list below all Participating State Agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development, including at a minimum: the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of CCDF, the section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA programs, State-funded preschool, home visiting, Title I of ESEA, the Head Start State Collaboration Grant, and the Title V Maternal and Child Care Block Grant, as well as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, the State’s Child Care Licensing Agency, and the State Education Agency.

For each Participating State Agency, the applicant should provide a cross-reference to the place within the application where the MOU or other binding agreement can be found. Insert additional rows if necessary. The Departments will determine eligibility.

Participating State Agency Name (Indicate the Lead Agency)	MOU Location in Application	Funds/Program(s) administered by the Participating State Agency
DECAL (Lead Agency)	APPENDIX 22 pg 675	Child Care Licensing CCDF State Administrator State-funded Prekindergarten TQRIS Infant Toddler Initiative Professional Development System
Georgia Head Start State Collaboration Office (Housed at DECAL)	APPENDIX 22 pg 681	Head Start State Collaboration Office

