



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # GA-5009

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

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	17
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality</p>		
Comments on (A)(1)		
<p>Georgia presents a high-quality response to the request for demonstration of its past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs. Georgia has demonstrated strong financial commitment to providing high quality early learning and development programs. (A)(1)(a)Between 2007 and 2011, Georgia's funding for Georgia Pre-K grew by 14.7%. During the same time period, Georgia's total investment in early learning and development grew by 9.2%. (A)(1)(b)The state documents increasing percentages of children with high needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs between January 2007 and the present. A 9.3% increase in enrollment of these children in state-funded preschool and a 6.6% increase in their enrollment in Early Head Start and Head Start were documented. (A) (1) (c)Georgia's Lottery for Education provides funding for the strong Georgia Pre-K programs. Georgia also provides support for many other programs that support early learning and development, including an Infant and Toddler Network, health services, home visiting programs, and a focus on nutrition and wellness education. (A)(1)(d) Georgia currently has begun work on developing many of the building blocks of early learning and development: an existing set of Georgia Early Learning Standards, a comprehensive assessment system for Georgia's Pre-K, a website and adopted curricula devoted to healthy eating, a number of successfully functioning family engagement strategies, support for educators in expanding their educational credentials and a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Georgia does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment.</p>		
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Georgia presents a medium quality response to the request for articulation of the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals. The state begins by listing two overarching, ambitious, yet achievable goals: "1. Substantially increase the number of Children with High Needs enrolled in high quality early learning and development programs; and 2. Effectively transform Georgia's good early learning and development components into a great statewide system that supports increased access to high quality programs and services for Children with High Needs." However, the projects described to meet each of the strategies associated with these goals are not sufficiently ambitious to accomplish the two overarching goals. For example, Strategy Four discusses "implementing policies and incentives to increase career development". Projects 8 and 9 are proposed to accomplish this strategy. However, it is not clear how Project 8, aligning the workforce knowledge and competency frameworks with the GELD, is tied to this goal and Project 9, Communities of Practice is nowhere in the application sufficiently described. No proposal is made to more directly increase career development by using funds to increase the percentage of head teachers with a BA in early childhood. Georgia does not provide an adequate summary of how their plans, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda. Georgia does not provide a clear picture of how instruction in their early learning and development centers will be improved as a result of the many initiatives they propose. No mention is made of increasing the number of high-quality programs available by increasing the adult: child ratios in early learning and development centers to meet nationally accepted standards of high quality. No discussion of decreasing the readiness gap is presented. Georgia does provide a rationale that justifies its choice to address each selected criteria in the Focused Investment Areas.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Georgia presents a plan for governance structure which is only minimally implemented and of medium quality. The relationship between the lead agency, DECAL, and the Georgia State Advisory Council is minimally described and confusing. The leadership of the Advisory Council is shared between the governor and an unnamed "member of the private business sector". No credentials or expertise in early childhood are provided for this person. Five subcommittees of the State Advisory Council, aligned with the goals of the proposal, will report to the council. In addition, an action team will oversee each project in the grant. The organizational structure appears too complex to "streamline decision making" (A)(3)(a) No method of decision-making or dispute resolution is provided, especially important in a complex governance structure. No substantive plan is presented for involving parents in the planning and implementation of grant activities. Rather, the only mention of parents is a brief statement that parents will be recruited as members of Action Teams. Strong letters of support, from a variety of stakeholders, are presented. Highly detailed, comprehensive scope of work agreements from all participating state agencies are included.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	6
The extent to which the State Plan--		
(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;		
(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--		
(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;		
(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and		
(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and		
(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality		
Comments on (A)(4)		

Georgia provides a medium/low quality plan for using the budget to achieve the outcomes in the state plan. Personnel costs seem inflated; personnel and fringe benefits account for more than \$11 million of a total of almost \$70 million requested. The Department of Early Care and Learning alone requests a total personnel budget of \$6,615,468 over four years (and \$2,877,758 in benefits for these personnel positions), including four personnel positions to handle the "specific governance and oversight of the grant". The costs associated with so many administrative positions appear to be more than "reasonable and necessary", leaving Georgia inadequate funds to achieve the goals of the entire project. While much evidence is provided to support the need for improvement in the education of the early childhood workforce in the state, no grant funds are allocated for increases in scholarships or tuition assistance for teachers. In addition, no request is made for training stipends for the workforce. Insufficient grant funds are thus allocated for the local implementation of the state plan as outlined in Table 1, Georgia's Strategy Map, Strategy Four, " Create a cadre of knowledgeable, credentialed early childhood educators..." The only funds allocated for scholarships and incentives come from sources other than RTT-ELC. It is not clear if these are the same funds currently being distributed through HOPE Scholarships, or if any increase in funding is predicted. The amount of \$200,000, budgeted for the implementation of the kindergarten inventory, is inadequate to achieve the objective. A detailed table is provided to show alignment of funding streams and objectives for a variety of state agencies. However, no information is provided to explain how the scope of work of these agencies will change with the addition of grant funds. Adequate plans for sustainability of all projects are presented. Project 9, Communities of Practice, is minimally described and no definition for this project is included in the state's glossary.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

Georgia's plan for TQRIS is partially implemented and of medium quality. The table entitled High Quality, Accountable Programs: High Quality Plan provides evidence of the plan's partial implementation. Introductory work on the TQRIS began in 2009. A pilot of the TQRIS is scheduled for September-November 2011. Future projects include: • Conduct the Art of Technical Assistance Training for all technical assistance consultants supporting the TQRIS Process. • Recruit and serve programs serving Children with High Needs to participate in the TQRIS. • Implement a public awareness campaign to help parents understand the elements of quality early learning and development (years 1 and 2). Implement a public awareness campaign to help parents understand and utilize the TQRIS A timeline provided in the table includes: • September 2011-November 2011: Georgia TQRIS Pilot and Process Research • January 2012 :Open enrollment in TQRIS • January 2013: CLASS instrument introduced to rating process While Georgia has shown national leadership in developing a TQRIS that addresses all required standards, no evidence is provided that the standards reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards. In particular, the child-adult ratios do not align with standards such as NAEYC's. In addition, the descriptors of the level termed "good" are in no way descriptors of good care expected in a site serving more economically advantaged populations, and the use of the word "good" in this context is potentially misleading to parents and families.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Georgia presents a plan to maximize participation in the TQRIS which is partially implemented and of medium quality. They describe an innovative plan to use RTT-ELC funds to institute a tiered reimbursement plan as an incentive for participation in the TQRIS. This plan will not be implemented until 2012. Georgia's timeline states that in July of 2012, "Subsidy program begins issuing tiered reimbursement." They rely on hope for an improved economy to sustain tiered reimbursement at the conclusion of RTT-ELC. No other funding stream is identified to sustain the project. Only programs receiving the highest tier of quality rating will be eligible for bonuses. Programs in the middle tier are not provided bonuses to allow staff to continue to improve their educations and move to the top tier. Georgia's plan for improving participation of licensed child care centers and registered family day care homes to 50% in four years is not sufficiently ambitious. Much evidence is presented to show the low quality ratings currently in place in the majority of those centers. A more ambitious plan is needed to reach the proposal's stated goal of moving all care in Georgia "from good to great". No explanation is provided concerning why all sites receiving state Pre-K funding will be required to participate in the TQRIS by 2015, while sites receiving child care subsidy dollars will only be recruited and encouraged to participate.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	8

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Georgia presents a plan to maximize participation in the TQRIS that is only partially implemented and of medium quality. Partial implementation is attested to in the timeline, which states that TQRIS ratings for programs not participating in the current pilot will begin in December 2012. Georgia's plan for monitoring the TQRIS relies on random sampling of one-third of classrooms. Quality of teaching varies widely among classrooms in any school. Also, since the chance of any individual child's classroom being monitored in a given year is only 33% and data need to be collected for a given child over a period of years, this random sampling will not provide the longitudinal data needed to draw conclusions concerning the relationship between a child's early childhood experience and his readiness for kindergarten. Thus, Georgia's plan for monitoring programs participating in the TQRIS does not meet the standard of "monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate

frequency".

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	10
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);</p> <p>(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and</p> <p>(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--</p> <p>(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and</p> <p>(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)
<p>Georgia presents a plan for improving the quality of programs participating in the TQRIS that is partially implemented and of medium quality. They describe a history of providing technical assistance to all programs participating in the TQRIS and outline an ambitious plan to extend additional technical assistance with RTT-ELC funds. They present an innovative plan to provide additional bonuses to programs scoring "very good" or "excellent" to support the inclusion of children with disabilities. However, they do not extend these bonuses to programs enrolling the larger number of children with special needs, of which children with disabilities comprise only a small fraction. Georgia describes an innovative mentoring approach to workforce development. However, no incentives for mentee or mentor participation in the mentoring program are mentioned. Georgia describes the current status of programs to provide families who have children with high needs access to high-quality Early Learning and Development programs as "a fragmented system of care that required constant follow-up". They describe an ambitious use of RTT-ELC funds to greatly improve the system. No plans for sustainability of the new system are presented. The chart, Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1), shows a score of 0 for number of programs in each of tiers 1, 2 and 3. Since this chart includes classrooms participating in Georgia's Pre-K, data should currently be available for at least this fraction of the classrooms. Weaknesses documented above prevent Georgia from receiving a score of more than medium quality on this response.</p>

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	6
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--</p> <p>(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and</p> <p>(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

Georgia presents a medium/ low-quality response to validate the effectiveness of the state's TQRIS. They describe a plan to conduct an exploratory research study to determine the best method of encouraging school based Georgia Pre-K into the TQRIS. It is not clear why different standards are being set for school based programs. Data needed to comply with the research design described will not be provided by the proposed plan to administer the TQRIS. No baseline information is available for programs, so progress cannot be measured. Thus, it will not be possible to determine the relationship between changes in quality ratings and children's progress in learning, development and school readiness.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>Georgia presents a substantially implemented, medium-quality plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development standards that are used statewide. Georgia pioneered in work on the standards by developing the Pre-K Learning Goals in 2002. Notable strengths of Georgia's work include the existence of Georgia's Early Learning Standards Alignment Studies, published in July of 2011, which contains suggestions for alignment with primary grade standards. Georgia provides no evidence that the standards are culturally or linguistically appropriate across each age group. Georgia is currently working on a revision to align the Early Learning and Development Standards for children birth through age five with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards K-3, which were released in September of 2011. Georgia describes a detailed plan to align professional development with the Early Learning and Development Standards. Professional Development will include face-to-face trainings, online courses and podcasts. Georgia Public Broadcasting will produce a series of live streaming professional development sessions.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

Georgia presents a partially implemented, medium quality plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate comprehensive assessment systems. Authors of the proposal describe Georgia's current assessment system as "assessment utopia" and then contradict themselves by outlining a number of major problems. Currently, most programs in Georgia do not use either a measure of the environment or of adult-child interaction, two of the most reliable measures of early learning quality. The locally developed instrument used to monitor the Georgia Pre-K classroom environments was subject to low inter-rater reliability and "could not be scored reliably by field staff". DECAL then substituted a self-reported environment assessment. No mention is made of the agreement of Pre-K field staff with the self-reported instrument in the field staff's assigned duty to monitor the self-reported instrument. Few Georgia programs currently screen children for behavioral issues. While the state plans to use grant funds to create a statewide focus on meeting the social emotional needs of children, this program has not begun and no plans for its sustainability after the grant are presented.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	11

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

Georgia presents a partially implemented, medium-quality plan to support families of children with high needs. Strengths of the plan include the alignment of Family Engagement standards and Parent Programs with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the use of parent educators and parent mentors in Babies Can't Wait and the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership. A plan is presented for revising the TQRIS Family Partnership Standard to improve its cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Currently, a program can be rated excellent if the staff has received a minimum of six hours of training in cultural and linguistic competence. This standard does not align with nationally accepted standards. No mention is made of strengthening families by coordinating services with adult literacy programs, family literacy programs or English Language Learner programs.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D).

which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>Georgia presents a substantially implemented, medium quality plan to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The competencies were originally developed in 1994 and updated in 2006. Georgia is currently revising the Georgia Early Learning Standards and Pre-K Content Standards and revising them into the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards. They will be aligned with the Georgia Performance Common Core Standards and the Pre-K and Kindergarten Assessments. A strength of Georgia's current system is the organization of twelve Career Levels. However, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission judges a degree to be Early-Childhood-related if the transcript includes 15 semester hours or 25 quarter hours of ECE-related courses. This is not a sufficient number of hours to include the knowledge critical for high-quality ECE teachers.</p>		

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(2)		
<p>Georgia presents a partially implemented, medium quality plan to support early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities. The proposal describes a number of innovative training opportunities currently in place, including the Online Learning Library Project and training specifically designed for English Language Learners. Funds are requested for the extension of professional development to include the Communities of Practice model. Insufficient detail describing this model is included in the application. A very minimally implemented system for tracking and reporting data on early childhood educator development, advancement and retention currently exists. RTT-ELC funds will be used to improve the system. No sustainability plan is presented. A very low target (an increase of one institution per year) is set for increasing the total number of local universities who offer ECE programs aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. This goal does not seem sufficiently ambitious. The low targets set for (D)(2)(d)(2), are not adequately ambitious.</p>		

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	8

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

Georgia presents a minimally implemented, medium quality plan to implement a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. No kindergarten entry assessment currently exists in Georgia. Strengths of Georgia’s plan are the existence of a comprehensive definition of kindergarten readiness and of GKIDS, a measure of first grade readiness. Georgia plans to use RTT-ELC funds to retool GKIDS as a kindergarten entry assessment. No description of the retooled instrument is provided, so it is impossible to judge if it is "valid, reliable and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English language learners and children with disabilities". Plans are presented to train kindergarten teachers in the administration of this instrument. No mention is made of providing funds for substitutes or extended days to allow kindergarten teachers to administer the instrument. Georgia will post the results of the kindergarten entry assessment in its State Longitudinal Data System. Funding for implementation of the kindergarten entry assessment, approximately \$200,000 per year, will come from the budget of the Georgia Department of Education. An explanation for the use of this funding is not included.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

Georgia presents a partially implemented, medium quality plan for enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. Georgia has used a Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant to build an infrastructure that will easily incorporate the Work Sampling system assessment used by Georgia's Pre-K classes. The state has also used Race to the Top funding to build a P-20 State Longitudinal Data System. Georgia will use RTT-ELC funds to build upon these efforts and create a "statewide, coordinated data system". A thorough plan is presented for creation and responsibilities of a Data Governance Council. A comprehensive timeline outlines the activities and responsibilities of each agency in accomplishing key goals. Georgia presents no information concerning the uses of the data to be collected, or the questions for which data will provide an answer. Therefore, it cannot be judged that the data will be, "timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making." A number of the Essential Data Elements are partially implemented. Georgia currently collects very limited data for families of children attending early learning and development programs. RTT-ELC funds will be used to complete the assignment of unique identifiers to all children and teachers and to collect program participation and attendance data for all children.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	163

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	0

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Georgia presents a minimally implemented, low quality plan to include all early learning and development programs in the TQRIS. The state presents a plan to provide educational assistance incentives, scholarships and tiered reimbursements to support higher participation in the TQRIS. The training needed to qualify for each incentive is named, but not described in any detail. It is not possible to determine if the training is sufficient to improve a site's score on the TQRIS. Georgia currently requires licensing for all programs that serve three or more unrelated children. No plan is presented to change licensing regulations to comply with the requirements of (P)(2)(a). The proposal states, "All eligible child care providers...may volunteer to participate in Georgia's TQRIS". No information is provided concerning the existence of any state plans to require the participation of all programs in a licensing and inspection program, or in the TQRIS, by June 30, 2015.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (F)(3)

Georgia acknowledged in its response to Status Table (A)(1)-12 that no Kindergarten Entry Assessment currently exists. Georgia earned only 60% of the maximum points available under criterion (E)(1).

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

Georgia's application does not comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they will be successful in kindergarten. Georgia's expectations for each level of its TQRIS are set too low to provide the quality of care described as "good, very good, and excellent". In particular, expectations on the TQRIS for teacher education do not meet nationally recognized standards of a BA in Early Childhood for all head teachers. Adult-child ratios on the TQRIS need to be increased substantially to comply with national standards of high quality, such as the accreditation standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Georgia's plans for meeting Criterion (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children leave many questions unanswered. Georgia does not have a currently functioning Kindergarten Entry Assessment and its plans to retool the GKIDS as such an instrument are so unspecified that it is impossible to predict if the project's implementation will result in improved outcomes for children. Georgia is currently revising their Early Learning and Development Standards. Georgia presents no evidence that the standards are, or will be, "culturally and linguistically appropriate across each age group". Georgia's plans to support families of Children with High Needs ignore many nationally accepted standards of excellence, such as promoting family literacy programs or adult English Language Learning programs. While Georgia does present a plan to address Focused Investment Area (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, inadequate emphasis is placed on meeting this outcome. No funds from RTT-ELC are proposed to support additional scholarships or tuition assistance for educators. Very low targets are set for increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Georgia does address Focused Investment Area (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress. However, the proposal does not provide any information on the uses of the data which the proposed data system will collect. It is thus not possible to predict with any degree of certainty that data collected will actually be used to improve outcomes for children.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # GA-5009

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 10:41 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 17. Includes detailed text description of the core area requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
A(1)a: GA has almost 450,000 children age 0-5 of whom slightly more than half are low income. GA has contributed \$410 to \$450 million annually for Early Learning and Development(ELD) since 2007...

programs efficiently and promote effective collaboration. Some funding comes from a trust fund and some from the state lottery; the bulk of state funds presumably come from state and local taxes. Overall, GA's history of ELD legislation and existing systems are clear strengths of this application. (A)(1)(d): ELD Standards: GA has ELD standards for 0-3 and preK. The development process included vetting by stakeholders and consultation with nationally-known experts. These standards are clearly written and laid out in manner that should be clear to teachers. The documents include standards, performance indicators, and sample behaviors for teachers to recognize in class. The 0-3 guidelines are separated in one-year intervals. Both sets of standards appear to cover the Essential Domains of School Readiness, although the preK standards include approaches to learning as part of the socio-emotional domain. The preK standards include sections that explicitly address special needs children, cultural and linguistic diversity, and working with families. Such information was less evident in the 0-3 guidelines, although it is alluded to in the introductory section. Both documents include alignment between the state 0-3, preK, and K standards. The preK standards are also aligned with the Head Start Child Outcome Framework. Appendix 14 includes an independent evaluation of the ELD standards. This report is favorable about the quality of the standards. Suggestions include more emphasis on: non-cognitive domains for preK, approaches to learning, sequencing standards by order of developmental difficulty, alignment, and challenge. A revision of the ELD standards based on this evaluation is expected in 2012. Overall, ELD standards are good and are an asset to the application; there are a few areas in which the standards could be improved (universal applicability, challenge, alignment). The extent to which the ELD standards are understood and used by teachers in their daily practice is not addressed in this application. GA appears to have several elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) in place. GA preK, EHS/HS, and home visiting programs currently address all four aspects of a CAS, and IDEA Part B, Title 1, and IDEA Part C address three, two, and one aspects, respectively. CCDF programs have no assessment requirements, unless they participate in TQRIS; in that case, CCDF programs must show evidence of addressing three aspects of a CAS. Details on the content of the CAS are less readily apparent. Screening activities are conducted by a wide variety of persons and organizations, e.g., pediatricians, EHS/HS, early intervention programs. Thus, it is possible for children to miss being screened if this does not happen during well baby visits. Little information is provided on actual completed screening rates. Although screening is required in preK programs, according to teacher report data collected by an external evaluator, only 33-62% of these programs provide screening. GA preK classrooms use Work Sampling as a formative assessment and as of last year, are using the CLASS to measure classroom quality. Overall, the current status of CAS in the preK program is a strength of this application. Assessment in childcare centers and family childcare homes is an area of weakness. Health practices: According to Table (A)(1)(8) several elements of highly quality health practices are currently in place. PreK, EHS/HS, IDEA Part C, and home visiting programs address three or all four stipulated practice areas. Again, CCDF programs, and IDEA Part B fall short in this area. The content of health promotion activities is only briefly mentioned. There appears to be a website and curriculum available relating to healthy eating and physical activity. The extent to which these resources are used and related outcomes are not described. Family engagement strategies vary across programs. Again, there are few required family engagement practices for CCDF sites. The current voluntary Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TQRIS) includes an on-line teacher training module and self-assessment, parent conferences, and program policies and training in family diversity. GA has adopted Family Engagement Standards, but the extent to which they are used is not described. GA does not currently have a database that provides a clear picture of teacher credentials. GA has a professional development (PD) registry. Registration appears to be voluntary and it is not clear what percentage of personnel are included in the registry. The most common credentials reported in the PD registry are Child Development Associate (CDA) (20%) and certified Early Childhood Education teacher with a bachelor's degree (17%). Data from the recent external evaluations of preK, center, and infant-toddler quality may provide a more accurate estimate of workforce credentials because those studies included a random sample of programs. The great majority (89-91%) of staff in childcare centers and family childcare homes have less than an associate's degree; staff qualifications in GA preK classrooms are considerably higher and the majority of lead teachers have at least bachelor's degree. The recently raised minimum teacher credentials (lead teacher must have a CDA or community college certificate) still represent a modest bar. There is a system for incentives to achieve credentials but it is unclear how many teachers take advantage of this assistance. There is a system for credentialing trainers, but the extent to which their services are used is not clearly stated. External evaluations included in the appendixes do provide self-report data by teachers on the annual number of professional development hours, which ranges from 15-36 depending on job and program type. It is not clear whether this training was provided by the state PD system or by in-house staff. Workforce competencies exist and include separate sections for early childhood providers, school-age providers, administrators, trainers, and technical assistance providers. For each type of personnel, competencies, goals, and indicators are provided and are separated into beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. The scope of the professional standards is commendable and the tiered structure lends itself well to use in a TQRIS system. According to Table (A)(1)(11), all institutions of higher education in GA align their instructional programs with the workforce competencies. Professional competencies appear to have undergone revisions over time. GA does not currently have a universal kindergarten readiness assessment. It is not clear why the first administration of the current kindergarten assessment (GKIDS) is not considered to meet this purpose. GA has a K-12 Longitudinal Data System that will soon include preK and IDEA Part B children. No program addresses all aspects of Essential Data Elements. However, DECAL, IDEA Part C, and home visiting address 5 of the 7 data elements. Overall, GA appears to have made a good start on data systems. The application includes Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) between DECAL and the state departments of education, health, and human services that provide for cross-agency sharing of confidential child-level data for the duration of the RTT-ELC grant. GA has spent several years developing a TQRIS system with consultation from national experts. The TQRIS currently includes a set of tiered program standards and assessment tools. Implementation was authorized in January, 2011. The TQRIS includes all 4 components of criterion health practices and three out of four components of a Comprehensive Assessment System, with the fourth to be slated to be added in 2013. Participation is voluntary and about 1% of ELD programs are currently enrolled. The TQRIS system appears to be well developed and is in the very initial stages of enrolling and rating ELD programs. Summary: GA has many building blocks for a high quality ELD system already in place including a universal preK, a TQRIS, workforce competencies, and components of a CAS. The state has increased both funding and enrollment in preK and enrollment in CCDF. GA appears to have a solid foundation on which to build. GA works closely with several external evaluators and there is evidence throughout the application that these evaluations are used as the basis of revisions and quality improvement, which is a strength of this application. In addition, GA has concrete plans already in place (such as a target date for migrating administration of CCDF funds to the DECAL) that are consistent with building a comprehensive system. Weaknesses identified in the present system, such as voluntary participation in the PD registry are minor in terms of likely effects on service

delivery compared to features identified as strengths. Looking across the range of components of the current GA ELD landscape this is a high quality response.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	15

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

GA's plan is ambitious in the following areas: (a) it addresses all but one of the optional selection criteria, (b) governmental structures, work teams, and system assessments plans will be operational by 2013, (c) universal kindergarten readiness assessments will be used in 2014, (d) 5,000 teachers will be trained on ELD standards and assessment requirements by the end of the grant, and (e) half of the children receiving CCDF subsidies will be served in mid-tier quality programs by the end of the grant. However, other aspects of this plan are less ambitious, meaning that they do not comprise high quality goals, including a) low required thresholds for environmental quality scores in the TQRIS, (b) high teacher-child ratios for the TQRIS, and (c) a professional development (PD) system that does not clearly include on-site coaching or follow-up to help teachers successfully apply PD content in improved classroom practice. Most aspects of GA's plan appear to be achievable. This is because many components of the plan are already in place including the DECAL office, a TQIRS system that has just launched, existing ELD standards and workforce competencies, and a functioning K-12 data system. It should be relatively easy to build on the existing foundation. Those aspects of the plan that appear to be the most difficult to reach include (a) developing, validating and implementing a universal kindergarten assessment within two years, (b) providing training for 5,000 teachers that is sufficiently rich and meaningful to change existing knowledge and practices, and especially (c) getting half of the almost 40,000 children served by CCDF funds enrolled in programs that meet mid-tier quality standards. Currently, GA preK sites are typically of moderate quality, as reported in 2009 and 2010 state-wide evaluation reports. However, more CCDF children are likely to be served in infant-toddler centers and family childcare homes, most of which are currently low quality. Information is not provided on the number of families that use CCDF monies to purchase family, friend, and neighbor care. Under a voluntary TQRIS system, it will be a challenge to bring so many non-preK programs into the system and more important, significantly improve their quality within a four year window. The application includes a clear and logical logic model that organizes the plan into five big-picture strategies, each of which has a set of projects, project goals and outcomes. Most of the goals are explicit and concrete, e.g., provide training for 5,000 teachers. The logic model serves as an organizational framework for subsequent sections of the application. For example, for each project describe in the logic model the roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies and community partners are listed in a series of memoranda of understanding. It is also clear why most criteria were selected, as most build directly on existing infrastructure and practices; projects 6, 7, 9 are the least well justified. Based on the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses outlined above, this is a medium-high quality response.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(4)

(A)(3)(a) The application includes a diagram and explanation of a clear organizational structure that consists primarily of state agencies. DECAL is the administrative agency and the State Advisory Council (SAC) is the governing body. Action teams appear to conduct the bulk of the planning and implementation work. However, it is not clear how the purview of the SAC sub-committees is clearly differentiated from that of the action teams; this is an area of possible redundancy in the governing structure. Consolidation of all CCDF activities under DECAL seems like an effective strategy. No provisions are given for conflict resolution. Little detail is provided on (a) the size of the action teams, (b) how participants (especially parents) will be recruited and selected, and (c) whether participation is paid or voluntary, which may affect participation. The goal of including 10% family representation on action teams is laudable; however, there is surprisingly little mention of teacher participation. Most of the groups listed have existing relationships and the proposed RTT-ELC organizational structure is similar to the status quo; this should very much ease the start-up period. (A)(3)(b) Memoranda of understanding (MOU) documents are included for about 12 state agencies and 4 additional organizations. These are the agencies most prominent in the organizational structure, e.g., ones that serve as team leaders, and are also the agencies that are current key players in the ELD area. The list includes some creative choices, e.g., using public television to develop PD videos and provide on-line access. Each MOU includes a scope of work that gives the relevant RTT-ELC selection criterion, participating agency staff, and agency responsibilities. Some responsibilities are general, e.g., participate on action teams, encourage participation. Other responsibilities are moderately to highly specific, e.g., incorporating revised standards into departmental training, responsible for increasing bonuses to TQRIS participants, hire a pediatric nurse or parent educator to augment DECAL staff or a specialist to verify workforce credentials, conduct analyses and prepare annual reports on the effectiveness of RTT-ELC projects, provide 8-16 hours of train the trainer instruction to PD providers. Thus, it appears that each collaborating agency is clearly aware of expectations. (A)(3)(c) Also about 60 letters of support from state legislator, business organizations, and parent, community, and educational organizations are included. Some of these organizations are likely to play a role in the RTT-ELC plan, including being listed as financial contributors in other sections of the application (e.g., United Way). This is a high quality response that is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	10

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The total project budget includes almost \$70 million in RTT-ELC funds and \$51 million in other funds, primarily state funds and federal monies such as CCDF allocations to the state. Thus, GA is providing a substantial proportion of the total budget. Budget tables are clearly presented, showing both agency-level and project-level allocations. The bulk of monies are allocated to DECAL, the GA Department of Human Services (DHS), and the GA Department of Education (DOE) and are used to support TQRIS and workforce development activities, with smaller sums allocated for data, health, and ELD standards. This suggests that the bulk of funds will provide direct support for quality improvement in the form of professional development services, TQRIS infrastructure, and program incentives. These are all positive aspects of the budget plan. In almost all cases, the budget narratives provide a clear description of the specific ways that new funds will be used. One exception is the \$32 million allocated to DHS to support the TQRIS. Little information is provided on how this money will be spent and less than one-third appears to be slated for reimbursements to programs. In addition, for all agency budgets, much more information is provided about the specific ways that RTT-ELC funds will be spent but little is said about what is supported by existing funds. The application does not include a detailed explanation of why the applicants believe the proposed budget is adequate. Certain details, such as the average expected incentive per program are not given. Six additional TQRIS Environmental Rating System (ERS) observers will be hired. It is not stated how many sites each assessor will observe nor what constitutes a manageable caseload. Organizational sustainability will be achieved by continuing most of the governance structure (other than the action teams) after the end of the grant period. In some cases, state agencies have committed to continuing a staff position beyond the duration of the grant. There are plans to use future CCDF quality funds to support continuation of the TQRIS. However, no estimates are given of the size of these expected funds and whether aspects of CCDF will be curtailed to allow this allocation. As may be expected, much less detail is provided regarding sustainability that project activities. Overall, the budget appears adequate in size and considerable attention appears to have been given to the specific resources needed by participating agencies. The state is providing substantial financial resources and much of the RTT-ELC monies are directed at one-time or time-limited activities needed to build the system (such as developing the kindergarten assessment). This is a medium-high quality response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;

(5) Health promotion practices; and

(6) Effective data practices;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The TQRIS Program Manual and scoring instruments included in the appendixes provide a complete, detailed and easy-to-follow explanation of the TQRIS process, serving as an excellent foundation for system implementation. The TQRIS system addresses each of the content areas listed in (B)(1)(a). ELD standards are covered as GA standard 5—Intentional Instruction. Programs must show evidence of having a curriculum, lesson plans that align with GA's ELD standards, and at the higher levels, teachers must show knowledge of how to support Dual Language Learners (DLL) and diversity practices. The required inclusion of PD plans for all directors and teachers at all tiers is a strength. Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) are addressed in GA standards 5—Intentional Instruction (formative assessment, ERS ratings of classroom quality) and standard 2—Health (vision, dental, hearing screening are required at all tiers, child screening in other developmental areas is required only for top-tier programs). Other sections of the application narrative suggest that the CLASS Prek assessment of teacher-child interaction will be added in 2013. Although the ERS tool does include some aspects of interaction, it is more often seen as a measure of environmental quality. Educator qualifications are thoroughly covered in GA standard 1; however the bar for teacher educational credentials is not set very high. Family engagement is covered in GA standard 4 and health promotion in standards 3 and 2—(ratios). Ratios are another area in which the bar is not set high, only meeting national recommendations at the highest tier. Data systems are partially addressed; programs must provide data on staff qualifications and child demographic characteristics. The program standards are clearly laid out. Most items are readily quantifiable (e.g., ERS scores, % of teachers meeting different levels of educational qualifications). Other items are more subjective (e.g., extent to which a teacher shows knowledge of diversity practices) but this is common in quality rating and accreditation data, which typically include a combination of "objective" data and portfolio data. All TQRIS rating levels include personal PD plans for teachers and directors. Thus, even staff who have already achieved levels of excellence are required to continue to make improvements in their practice; this is a strength of the TQRIS. Scoring rubrics, weights, and scores needed to achieve each of the three quality levels are provided. In 2008, an outside evaluator conducted a feasibility study. This report (included in an appendix) documents a cross-walk of TQRIS standards with NAEYC accreditation standards. NAEYC is widely considered to be a rigorous accreditation and the evaluator found high levels of correspondence between the content. Teacher-child ratios present more of a mixed picture. Ratios for Tiers 1 and 2 are not optimal, however, teacher-child ratios at Tier 3 are better (more rigorous) than the requirements for Head Start programs. One area of possible concern involves the criteria for level 1 or "Good" rating. Here, classroom quality scores on the ERS only need to be in the range of 2-3 out of 7. Thus, programs rated as "Good" can still be on the low end of quality as measured on the ERS. This is a place where the bar is not set very high. Programs that are licensed or regulated in GA must be in compliance with licensing requirements in order to participate in TQRIS. Even the lowest TQRIS tier exceeds the minimum licensing standards. Support is available for programs that fail to meet licensing standards and data reported in the application narrative indicate that this support has been over 90% effective in moving programs into the compliant range. GA has been developing the TQRIS system since 2006. The system is in place and it appears that a handful of programs (< 1% statewide) are currently participating since the system launch in January 2011. Prior requirements for GA preK classrooms are already higher than the licensing requirements, so the state has experience with something akin to a TQRIS. Overall, this is a high quality plan for TQRIS that is partially implemented. Program standards are fully mapped out and approved and a small number of programs are already using the new system. Other aspects of the TQRIS, such as implementing the CLASS observation, hiring new TQRIS assessors, and enrolling additional teachers into PD options have yet to be enacted.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	7

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

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

(1) State-funded preschool programs;

(2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;

(3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;

(4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

All types of ELD programs with the exception of family, friend, and neighbor care are eligible to participate in the TQRIS on a voluntary basis. Only state-funded preK programs are required to participate. It is not known how attractive the voluntary TQRIS system will be. Lack of universal, required participation is a likely impediment to reaching the criterion of having all publicly funded programs on-board. Strategies to encourage participation include (a) automatic notification of eligibility for all programs that meet licensing requirements, (b) an on-line application and data submission process including a help desk, (c) providing no-cost training on TQRIS standards through regional childcare referral agencies and on-line resources, (d) providing individualized technical assistance if requested (although the nature of this assistance is not described), and (e) providing free materials such as gross motor equipment or child screening software and computers. Care has been taken to make it easy for systems to access the process and receive support. Evidence to justify the adequacy of this support is not provided, e.g., non-credit training course details such as the length of each course, instructional techniques, and types of assignments; the expected caseload for the 60-70 new technical assistance providers and how many hours of on-site coaching per site can be provided. There is much evidence that teacher and classroom change does not occur when training involves coursework or one-time workshops without applied "homework," reflection, and on-site peer or professional coaching. It is not clear whether these follow-up supports will be provided. A system for credentialing technical assistance providers has been planned, which speaks to attention to quality control in professional development. However, the per program monetary value of material incentives or direct financial incentives such as tiered tuition subsidy reimbursements is not given; participation is likely to be higher when financial incentives are more substantial. Little information is provided in this section application concerning affordability for parents. It was not clear whether tiered reimbursement is a system in which programs received more money per CCDF child for attaining higher quality ratings or whether families receive a higher subsidy when they enroll their child in a higher rated center. It was not made clear whether increased subsidies would reduce out-of-pocket costs to parents and by how much. The plan does state that programs that serve high proportions of high needs children will be recruited, which should increase supply, and teacher- and program-level incentives appear to be directed a programs with lower pay rates and/or higher proportions of children with high needs. Goals are to have 50% of children served by CCDF funds enrolled in Tier 2 or Tier 3 programs by 2014 and 60% of all programs participating in some aspect of the GA overall ELD plan by 2015. At first this seems ambitious and perhaps difficult to attain. However, evaluation data from a random sample of GA ELD programs indicate that 83-89% of GA preK classrooms, 60% of other preK-age center-based classrooms, 48% of family childcare homes, and 27% of infant-toddler classrooms have ERS scores compatible with a Tier 2 rating for environmental quality. Other areas, such as actual implementation of screening and formative assessment appear to lag behind the new TQRIS standards. Given the expectation that observed environmental quality may be one of the most difficult aspects of quality to change, these baseline data lend considerable support to the idea that GA can move programs into the middle tier level of environmental quality. Less evidence is provided to show what percentage of CCDF children are currently in programs of approximately this quality. Given the strengths and weaknesses outline above, this is a medium quality plan. Given that less than 1% of current ELD programs are currently rated, implementation is partial.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	9

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

A variety of tools for monitoring will be used including, the ERS package and CLASS, the GA professional development registry, self-rating surveys, and a portfolio. Monitors will be required to maintain levels of inter-rater reliability that meet commonly accepted standards in the field and in research arenas. Classroom observations will not be announced, which greatly increases the likelihood that monitors will see a typical classroom day rather than a rehearsed performance. Monitors will be trained on portfolio assessment; current reliability data are not provided. All these components are strengths of the application. Once achieving a tiered rating, programs will be re-assessed on an annual basis for staff qualifications, ratios, and portfolios. Direct observations will occur only every three years. Evidence to support the adequacy of the latter schedule is not provided. In January 2013, all TQRIS ratings will be posed on the DECAL website and at childcare referral agencies. GA public television and community partners will help with public education on what the TQRIS is and why quality is important. Estimates are not provided as to how many parents are likely to receive this information and make use of it. Not all parents may be internet users and current research suggests that low-income parents weigh access and affordability over quality when selecting ELD programs for their children. This is a high quality plan that has been partially implemented. Implementation includes the use of the CLASS in GA preK sites and a current system of PD trainers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Many aspects of the technical assistance system for the TQRIS have been discussed in the comments for (B)(2). Some new items were addressed in this section of the application narrative. Directors are required to attend an orientation session in which available PD resources are described (a help desk, on-line courses, and on-site technical assistance). A mentoring program is briefly mentioned. This will include a course for administrators and peer teachers who can provide mentoring within their programs. Also as noted in comments for section (B)(2) material and financial incentives will be provided. Additional incentives are earmarked for Tier 1 and 2 programs that accept children with special needs. Teachers in programs with low pay and/or that serve high needs children are eligible for bonuses of \$250 - \$2,500 and/or scholarships for increasing their credentials. The estimated number of participants is not provided. Subsidy bonuses and a public education campaign appear to be the main vehicles for increasing enrollment of high needs children in Tier 2 and 3 programs. Direct supports for parents include multilingual staff at referral agencies, on-line subsidy registration, free school meals, and a summer transition program, and a "review" of policies relating to program incentives to enroll high needs children. No estimates or literature review on the expected effectiveness of these practices is provided. Nor are data provided on the expected number of families served or how this number differs from current figures. By 2015 GA's goal is to have 60% of all ELD programs statewide at Tier 1 or 2. This is an laudable goal. Some program types already have higher expectations and current performance; these types of programs will be expected to show greater participation. For example, the target percentage of high quality programs in 2012 and 2015 by program type is as follows: GA PreK 25% - 90%, childcare preK 10% - 50%, family childcare homes (FCCH) 10% - 50%. In this section it is stated that GA PreK programs are "expected" to participate in TQRIS, but it is not clear if participation is mandated or simply encouraged. Given that other parts of the application describe the TQRIS as voluntary, the latter circumstance appears to be operative. The largest venues for children are GA PreK and CCDF programs. Given the target goals more high needs children will be served in high quality PreK sites than in CCDF sites and GA PreK will continue to be the primary avenue for providing high quality slots. This suggests that the post-award period will require continued targeted attention to achieving widespread quality in the CCDF system. EHS/Head Start, and IDEA children are not tabulated in Table (B)(4)(c)(2); it is not clear why they are included in the GA PreK and CCDF headcounts in this table when that does not appear to be the case in tables provided in section A. The plan is of medium quality. Implementation is partial, as about 40% of high needs children are currently served in the GA ELD system.

	Available	Score

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

15

7

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

A plan is in place to collect a representative sample of 200 programs that do vs. not volunteer to participate in TQRIS. This is a quasi-experimental design and when sites are well matched at pretest is a respectable alternative to random assignment. Five research questions have been written. It is not clear what measures and analytic strategies will be used. Some research questions (i.e., #1) are clear while others are not clearly stated (i.e., #2, #4). Since the aim of this validation study is to show whether TQRIS ratings sufficiently discriminate levels of program quality, these ratings will presumably need to be validated against other measures not included in the TQRIS monitoring battery. The choice of criterion measures will be important. A second validation study is proposed comparing children's history in care of different quality levels from birth to age four with universal kindergarten readiness outcomes. This is an exciting goal. However, the specific hypotheses may need to be scaled back; the research questions will require a minimum of 5 years of data (birth through kindergarten) and it does not appear that all these data will be available in project years 2-4. GA should be able to use quality scores at age 4 as predictors of kindergarten readiness and can address questions of wider longitudinal windows in future years. In addition to ELD program quality, other measures of children and family characteristics will need to be controlled; this is not mentioned in the plan. Finally, if the new kindergarten readiness assessment is not successfully validated, this study cannot be completed. This research will be conducted by DECAL and GA Office of Student Assessment staff. These departments appear to have adequate internal resources to complete this work. In summary, the goals of these validation studies are laudable and some planning of the research design and methods has taken place. However, many details of the validation study design are omitted. This a medium-low quality response.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	12

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

As explained in the comments for (A)(1)(d) GA has ELD standards for 0-3 and preK which were included in the appendixes. Both sets of standards appear to cover the Essential Learning Domains, although the preK standards include approaches to learning as part of the socio-emotional domain. The preK standards include sections that explicitly address special needs children, cultural and linguistic diversity, and working with families. Such information was less evident in the 0-3 guidelines, although it is alluded to in the introductory section. Appendix 14 includes an independent evaluation of the ELD standards. This report is favorable about the quality of the standards. Suggestions include more emphasis on: non-cognitive domains for prek, approaches to learning, sequencing standards by order of developmental difficulty, alignment, and challenge. A revision of the ELD standards based on this evaluation is expected in 2012. Both 0-3 and preK standards are aligned with GA K-12 standards. However the evaluation report points to areas in which alignment should be improved. These are being addressed in the 2012 revision. The present version of the ELD standards has been distributed to programs statewide (the percentage of programs receiving this information was not explicitly stated). ELD standards have been incorporated to an unknown extent in current professional development training. A review of curricula and how closely these align with the ELD standards has been conducted. However, it is not clear whether a list of approved or recommended curricula has been circulated. It appears that GA PreK programs incorporate the state ELD standards but it is not clear whether other programs do. GA has a reasonably well articulated plan on how to promote use of the revised ELD standards during the grant period. This includes a public awareness campaign, on-line professional development modules produced by public television (modeled after a successful system used to share information about new K-12 standards), and attention to multilingual and non English speaking providers. The goal is to reach 5,000 educators. This appears feasible, at least for providers with computer access. Less evidence is presented that shows how the new ELD standards will be included in the TQRIS, curriculum, CAS, and workforce competencies. This is a weakness of the response. Overall this is a medium quality response that is partially implemented, mostly through the distribution of ELD standards.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	10

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

According to Table (A)(1)(7), GA preK, Head Start, and home visiting programs currently address all elements of a CAS, although the assessment tools used differ across these programs. IDEAB and C and Title 1 programs address 1-3 of the 4 required elements, and CCDF programs address none (unless they participate in TQRIS tiers 2 or 3, where screening is required). GA presents the prek program as a model to apply to other ELD sectors in the future. GA preK programs (a) have a required health screening and referral procedure and ad-hoc behavioral screening, (b) use the Work Sampling System (WSS) for formative assessment, and (c) have achieved almost universal administration of the CLASS to assess classroom quality. Thus, this one program sector already has most elements of a CAS in place and is intended to serve as a model for expansion to other sectors and younger age groups. A review of current developmental screening practices has been conducted. a nurse practitioner will be hired to help with referrals; it is not explained how this one position is expected to lead to significant changes in children who are appropriately served. The workplan includes a committee that will review assessment practices and make recommendations; however, few details are provided about this process. Assessment topics will be included in the new planned PD modules posted by public TV, but again, details have not been developed. In summary, quality and implementation are currently high for the GA PreK, Head Start, and home visiting sectors. Other sectors are currently moderate to low in regards to quality and implementation. Because current

implementation varies across sectors and plans for the future CAS do not provide much detail, the overall response for (C)(2) is medium quality with partial implementation.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	8

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

The TQRIS currently includes family partnerships as one of six standards. Thus, family engagement is a prominent component (a strength). Indicators include the percentage of staff that have viewed an on-line family support training module, program self-assessment, parent conferences, family-friendly policies, and ongoing diversity training. It is not clear how these indicators demonstrate support for families as teachers. Depending on the Tier, between 50-100% of staff in TQRIS rated programs must complete an on-line module (which currently exists and is in use, a strength). However, no information is given about the demonstrated effectiveness of this module. Another strength of the TQRIS is the requirement for a family engagement plan; this requires even Tier 3 programs to engage in continuous quality improvement. A weakness is the low number of required PD hours devoted to family issues. There are other venues for family engagement. Family engagement is included in the GA workforce competencies. Early childhood issues will be introduced in the annual Department of Education-Parent Teacher Association conference. Activities of other organizations, such as Maternal and Child Health home visiting and Georgia Family Connections are mentioned. However, there does not appear to be a coherent and highly interconnected network of family-related organizations. It is not clear how many families are currently served and how outcomes are assessed. Although plans are in place to expose a large percentage of educators to the on-line module, little convincing evidence is provided that GA has a clear and comprehensive plan for increasing and evaluating the effectiveness of family support practices. This is a medium quality response and a partial level of implementation.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

GA has well-developed set of Workforce Competencies. Separate competencies are available for teachers, administrators, trainers, and TA providers. Each set of competencies is divided by content area and levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced). The Competencies were clearly laid out and easy to follow. Examples for each competency level are provided. These examples are sometimes general in nature and lend themselves to subjective evaluation, e.g., "identifies developmentally appropriate materials." After the 2012 revision of the ELD standards, the Workforce Competencies will be aligned and revised as needed. The Professional Development Registry (PDR) defines a progression of credentials and degrees. However, registration is not mandated and it is unclear how this progression aligns with Workforce Competencies. The GA university and technical college system currently provide degrees, certificates, and non-credit training that is said to be aligned with current competencies. These institutions plan to update their offerings as the Workforce Competencies are modified. The technical colleges are responsible for training the PD trainers. A relatively new bachelor's degree in birth to five (since 2008) and a new teaching credential in birth to five indicate that the higher education system is restructuring its offerings to correspond to recommended practices in pre-service teacher preparation. This is a strength. Overall this is high quality response that is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	10

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

Current strengths of the GA PD system include (a) trainer Workforce Competences and credentialing, (b) a board that approves PD course content, (c) a cadre of 463 credentialed trainers, and (d) existing higher education and noncredit PD courses and materials. However, little evidence is provided regarding the reach, quality, and effectiveness of these PD offerings. For example, because participation in the PD registry is voluntary, the current level of teacher qualifications and training needs are unknown and no state-wide database exists to track the actual number of PD hours or credits delivered. However, such a data base is planned. An evaluation of three ELD sectors conducted in 2008 found that the majority of teachers outside the GA preK system had low levels of educational credentials; this makes improvement a more daunting task. A variety of PD delivery modes appear to exist (credit-bearing courses, on-line modules, community workshops). No information is given about the modes most often, i.e., whether teachers are more likely to take non-credit modules or courses that could be used towards a higher credential or degree. Nor is it said whether non-credit PD offerings are one-session workshops or an integrated series and whether any on-site mentoring or follow-up is required. The new Communities of Practice (COP) are intended to be a mechanism for providing some degree of on-site support. Little information about the COPs is given. Scholarships and cash incentives for teachers are provided using lottery and ARRA funds. It is not clear how many teachers have received these benefits. Since training hours and educational credentials are included in the TQRIS system, it appears likely that many more teachers will use the training and incentive systems if goals for TQRIS participation are met. In addition, new requirements to register with the PDR and conversion to an on-line PDR database will greatly increase the accuracy of data on professional credentials. Very minimal targets are set for increasing the number of participating institutions of higher education. It is not clear whether this niche is already saturated and has little room for growth. In contrast, the number of trainers is slated to increase by about 50% by 2015. Tables provided in section (D)(2)(d) did not provide a clear picture of the current and target credentials of the ELD workforce. Overall this is a medium quality response that is partially implemented.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	7
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>Currently, GA PreK and Head Start classrooms use the WSS (most often in the online format) as a formative assessment. Kindergarten teachers statewide use a state assessment called GKIDS (also on-line) primarily as a summative assessment. GA plans to use these systems as models for the administration of a new kindergarten readiness assessment that will be developed. The seven domains of the current GKIDS appear to be partially aligned with the RTT-ELC Essential Domains of School Readiness; GKIDS has a greater focus on academic content areas. GA plans to develop a new version of GKIDS that aligns with the revised ELD standards, includes structured tasks and scoring rubrics, and meets NRC standards for assessment. The details of how this will be done are not provided and some possible internal contradictions may arise, e.g., how do "standardized tasks" also "allow for multiple approaches to assess a student's learning." The tasks and milestones outlined in the assessment development process are logical. However, unless the new assessment is closely related to the existing GKIDS, the timeline appears to be short, especially for developing the initial set of child tasks. No explanation is provided of whether currently available, validated instruments may be appropriate. No information is provided on statistical techniques used to verify the factor structure, IRT structure, internal consistency, tester, or test-retest reliability of the new assessment, nor are there plans to assess concurrent criterion-related validity. No specific methods are described to show how validity for different populations will be established. It is planned that the new assessment will be fully implemented in the 2014-2015 school year and that data will be entered in the new data system. In summary, it is asserted that the requirements of sections (E)(1) will be addressed, but detailed evidence to show how this will be done is lacking. This is a medium quality response that is partially implemented. However, the rating of partial implementation is based solely on the assertion that the new assessment will be based on the existing GKIDS.</p>

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	10
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p>		

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

GA has a K-12 Longitudinal Data System that includes child-level identifiers linked to current GA PreK and IDEA children (i.e., those already in the state education system). GA Prek classrooms also have a database for child attendance records. Teachers in the voluntary PD registry also have current IDs. Thus, some of the required aspects of a data system are in place. GA has used other grants to start the planning of the new cross-agency child longitudinal data system that will include the essential elements. Children will be assigned an ID at the first point of service entry contact (e.g., WIC, Head Start, CCDF recipients). These IDs will be portable to the K-12 data system. A new system will be developed in which ELD programs will enter child attendance data on-line. TQRIS data on program quality will be added to the existing licensing data system. Finally, PD trainers will enter training attendance data that will automatically update the workforce qualification levels. All of this work will build on existing smaller systems and be funded by RTT-ELC. It is not clear how these four systems will interface. A Data Council will develop policies and procedures for data storage and sharing across these four new systems and the current K-12 system. The plan appears to be logical but lacking in detail. Implementation issues will likely include getting widespread use of the new sub-systems, the intricacies of planning for security, migrating programs and agencies to the new data system, and training new users. Details on how these challenges will be handled are not provided. This is a medium quality plan that is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	165

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	6

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The DECAL current licenses and regulates most ELD programs in GA that are not under the aegis of the K-12 school system, IDEA, the military, and Head Start/Early Head Start. In GA, family child care homes are defined as serving 3 to 6 children, rather than the 2 or more sought under this criterion. Family, friend, and neighbor care, home visiting programs, and parent-child interaction programs do not appear to be licensed or eligible for TQRIS. All preschools, centers, and family childcare homes are eligible to participate in TQRIS on a voluntary basis. However, only state-funded GA preK programs will be required to participate in TRIS. Currently, these programs represent just under 25% of all licensed or regulated ELD programs. Given that GA will not make TQRIS mandatory for most ELD sectors, despite incentives and user-friendly proposed new system, it is unlikely that near-universal participation can be achieved. Currently, a TQRIS system is in place, but with very low participation. This is a medium quality response that is partially implemented.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>Neither criterion was met. GA does not have a current universal kindergarten readiness assessment and received less than 70% of possible points for (E)(1).</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>GA addressed all required sections as well as most of the optional criteria in this application. GA has a universal preK program, a K-12 longitudinal data system, a five-year-old TQRIS system that has recently been revised, ELD standards, and a existing PD system that is well integrated with institutions of higher education. GA has identified improving program quality and increasing educator credentials as priority areas for their state. New activities described in the application include mandatory TQRIS participation for state preK programs and allowing all other licensed or regulated programs to participate on a voluntary basis. Strategies are described for providing material, training, and cash incentives for programs that move to a higher rating tier. Supports for teachers include a choice between in-person and on-line training, scholarships for college coursework, and Communities of Practice to provide on-site mentoring. Family needs are addressed, as well as the implementation of a comprehensive ELD data system. Overall, this application presents a plan for increasing access to high-quality programs for children with high needs and thereby increasing school readiness.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # GA-5009

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 11:57 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The application makes a strong case that GA has a long history of investing in early learning and development as evidenced by their long standing commitment and state investment in state-funded universal preschool along with state support for other early learning and development programs. It also has blended state pre-k with Head Start. The state has created an agency (DECAL) focused on early learning which is additional evidence of its commitment. These are state policies that can serve as the foundation for an improved system for promoting early learning and development and these policies position the state well for moving forward. The plan to move the CCDF quality funds to DECAL is another example of state policy commitment. The state has developed early learning guidelines addressing all age years from birth to kindergarten. The inclusion of children with disabilities in state pre-K was addressed although no data were presented on how many children are served in this way so it was difficult to gauge the extent of this effort. The state is moving toward implementing a TORIS. The state also has made effective use of commissioned studies to inform next steps in the development of a state system. This is a practice that shows the state commitment to examining current structures and programs systematically and learning from data. The discussion of current status of some topics such as comprehensive assessment systems, family engagement strategies, and health promotion practices was vague and did not convey a strong sense of the state's level of commitment or investment in these areas. The state has done extensive work related to the development of supports for a skilled workforce laying much of the groundwork for skill improvement. The data suggests that the Pre-k program is not reaching a very high percentage of the state's 4 year olds which merited some explanation. Some of the information in the table, most notably some of the up and down funding patterns in Table A4a should have been explained or at least footnoted. Also, the sharp decline in the number of children served in Part B preschool raises concerns about the state's commitment to this population. The family engagement strategies table was especially difficult to follow. The current education levels in the work force are fairly low, supporting the need for more resources to address the issue and also suggesting the state will need to make a substantial effort to improve the quality of its programs. Since there is currently no kindergarten assessment, it is not clear why the table reported it was administered statewide. These issues with the tables are relatively minor. Overall, the section presents a high quality demonstration of the state's commitment.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	11

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The strategy map clearly lays out the various proposed components for the grant. A large number of what appear to be appropriately targeted projects are proposed. The map does not work well as a logic model because the expected outcomes of each project should have been specified. These are the intermediate outcomes that are expected to ultimately lead to improved outcomes for children with high needs. The intermediate outcomes provide the information to support the likelihood of the intended outcome for children being achieved. For example, the expected project level outcome for the comprehensive assessment project that result from providing training would be the number of professionals who will be reliably administering the assessment in classrooms. The discussion in the section did an adequate job of providing an overall summary but more integration across the pieces was needed to provide a stronger sense of the state's vision. Slightly more detailed summaries of the projects also would have been helpful to help communicate the state's plans for the grant and how the projects are connected to one another and the overall vision. The goals for Projects 1 and 2 did not appear to be connected to the nature of the project. For example, it is not clear how consolidating funds in one agency will result in more children participating in a tier 2 program. The discussion of assessment in GA Pre-K was difficult to follow in that it provided lots of detail without first providing information at the overview level. The same was true for the data system discussion. A number of assertions were made in this section without supporting evidence. For example, "Professional development credential are ensured to be aligned with NAEYC..." To be considered evidence, more information was needed to support the assertion that the credential were aligned. The section labeled "rationale" did not provide a rationale with the exception of the sentences on the selection of D1 and D2. This section did an adequate job of presenting the state's rationale for its reform agenda and goals (medium quality).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or

other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The application presents an extensive discussion about the governance structure and shows a logical extension of current organizational arrangements. A lead agency has been identified and its responsibilities are clearly delineated. The governance will make use of the existing State Advisory Council (with necessary expansions) which is a strength. The discussion was not clear on the role of the advisory subcommittees versus the role of the Action teams. Although labeled as Advisory subcommittees, the role of the subcommittees was described with the words that suggested a role closer to managing implementation. The Action Team also sounded like they were managing implementation which is clearly not a workable model for carrying out the day to day work of the projects. The discussion did not make a credible case that the proposed structure will result in effective management and day to day oversight. However, the proposed structure is very strong on involving numerous agencies and in providing opportunities for stakeholder involvement. The amount of support across various groups as demonstrated by the number and breadth of letters of support in the Appendix was very impressive. The proposed structure is partially implemented and the proposed plan is medium quality.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	7

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The overall budget for participating agencies and for projects is presented and linked back to material presented in other sections of the application. The budget is allocated across agencies and across projects. This is obviously an extremely complex budget to develop and communicate and the application does a good job of presenting the numbers but a barely adequate job of presenting the information used to derive the numbers. In general, there was not sufficient detail to evaluate the adequacy of the proposed line items. For example, the proposed budget for Project 4, the TQRIS, is nearly \$44 million. There is text describing what these funds will support but there is minimal information about how the figure was derived which is essential given the amount of money involved. In many places throughout the budget narrative, the text describes only what the project or activity is trying to accomplish with a general description of what the funds will support but not nearly enough information on how the numbers were derived to allow for a judgment of adequacy. This was especially true for the numerous activities which are being contracted out such as the development of the kindergarten assessment. Some other details that were troublesome include: (1) \$1.2 million for travel which was not justified; (2) evaluation appears in both the DECAL and DOE budgets with the overall amount being too little for a project of this scope and size but since so little information was presented about the nature of the evaluation questions and the methods to be used even this little amount was not supported; (3) Contractual costs for DPH appear excessive and are not linked to project work; (4) DOE includes funds for supporting Work Sampling licenses for special education classes which raises the issue of why these children are not included in classes for typically developing children especially given that the schools are operating Pre-K programs. Some of the information supported the case for sustainability (e.g., Projects 1 and 2) but other information for other projects did not. More detail was needed about sustaining the TQRIS. More information about what is in place right now, what is new and will be supported solely with grant funds, what is new and will be supported with other sources, and what the state expects it will need to support when the grant ends was needed to make the case for sustainability. It was similarly difficult to evaluate whether the comprehensive assessment system and the family engagement strategies would be sustainable.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The state has undertaken substantial work to build a TQRIS and is well on its way to implementation although it was not always clear what is already in place and what is part of a plan. Much of its development work and decision-making was based on research and expert review for which the state is to be commended. Similarly, the involvement of stakeholders was a plus. The TQRIS has clearly differentiated tiers and criteria for the tiers although there was not sufficient evidence presented in the section to make the case that the tiers reflect high expectations. The ELDS are embedded within the TQRIS. The linkages between comprehensive assessment and the TQRIS were less clear. Work Sampling is used by Pre-K and other programs are required to do "formative assessment" but more information as to what the state will consider as formative assessment would have been helpful. In general, more information about the role of self assessment and verification was needed to be able to evaluate the strength of the standards the state is proposing. For example, is a program considered to be conducting formative assessment if they self report that they are and does any assessment qualify as a formative assessment? The inclusion of the CLASS in the table also merited discussion since it is not in the Manual in the appendix. It is presumably an addition which is why more information was needed about its role in the TQRIS. The linkage with educator qualification and family engagement was well presented and appropriate. The section on effective data practices addressed piecemeal uses of data and did not present evidence that the TQRIS does a good job of addressing effective use of data across the tiers, much less promotes it. The TQRIS is linked to licensing in that programs must be licensed to participate. The development of the TQRIS was considered to be

partially implemented based on the information presented and the quality of the plan to adapt and adopt was considered a medium quality reflection of the criteria.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	4

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The policy as presented allows a variety of programs to participate. Much of the discussion is focused on incentives for child care programs. There is no explanation for why state Pre-K, 619, and Part C are not required to participate since these are state operated programs and their agencies are participating in the grant application. (A related issue not addressed in the application is the appropriateness of the quality standards for programs serving children with disabilities and the extent to which the TQRIS provides incentives for programs to serve children with disabilities). The application provides very little information on the policy and practices that will be adopted to help more families afford high quality child care. There do not appear to be any changes from the status quo. The tiered reimbursements have the potential to operate as incentives for programs to participate in the TQRIS and increase the quality of care for high needs children (a strength) but it is not clear how they will make care more affordable. Given the size of the investment in the tiered reimbursements (see budget) considerably more detailed information about how they will operate was needed. More information about the level of the payment would have been helpful in evaluating their likelihood of achieving the intended objective. There was insufficient information presented as evidence that these are likely to be effective, which is needed in a high quality plan. The state's Compass System, an online application system, sounds promising but it would have been more convincing if data were included on its effectiveness in actually reaching families. The targets provided are truly ambitious but the application would have been more convincing if information were provided to show why the state believes they are achievable. It would have been easier to evaluate the state's likelihood of being able to achieve the targets if information had been provided as to how the state arrived at these targets, why it believes the level of resources will be sufficient to achieve them, and the basis for assuming programs would be responding at these levels. The omission of education-based Pre-K in the targets table was notable and a striking weakness as was the failure to set targets for Early Head Start and Head Start. It was not clear what other programs Part C and 619 were included in and why no targets were set for them as well. A high quality plan all publicly funded early learning and development program participate in the TQRIS. The state's plan does not address this for several key programs. Although it was difficult to ascertain exactly which pieces in this section were planned and which were implemented, it was clear that that state is already partially implementing incentives to participate in the TQRIS. The quality of the discussion was medium based on the number of program types not addressed.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	8

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state has a set of tools incorporated in the TORIS. The application addresses interrater reliability which is a strength. The application needed more detail about the administration of the tool, for example, who oversees the determination of reliability and the qualification of the assessors was not addressed. The information provided about the portfolio assessment was not sufficiently detailed and it was not clear whether this piece was planned or is currently implemented so more or clearer information was needed. The application is strong in recognizing a need for a standard process and in addressing and setting high standards for reliability. The use of a public web site is one mechanism for informing parents but many other mechanisms are needed to ensure parents know about the TQRIS and have access to information about particular programs. The public awareness campaign needs to address TQRIS, not just indicators of quality. The application needed to address a plan for making information available to parents on the quality rating process and licensing. The state has partial implementation in this area and has proposed a plan of medium quality in that it has some strengths and some weaknesses.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	10

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The state has elements of a professional development system in place and is already using a system of incentives. This was deemed to be partial implementation in this area. The state has invested in developing a plan for a thoughtful and comprehensive infrastructure for the provision of technical assistance on the TQRIS. More information was needed on the feasibility of implementation and more importantly on the state's capacity to achieve its intended objectives. More detail on how the 60-75 TA consultants are identified, how they are funded, who supervises them, and whether they exist in sufficient numbers to improve quality was needed. Since there are thousands of programs that will be participating in the TQRIS, it is difficult to understand how 75 consultants will address this level of need. A statewide system of mentoring is a high quality professional development strategy but there was not sufficient information presented to show the state would be able to implement it. For instance, no information was presented on how the mentors would be funded, how much mentoring any individual provider would receive, or who would oversee the mentors. It is clear the state will be providing resources to improve quality but the application does not present enough evidence to make a case that the incentives are sufficient to motivate programs to want to work for higher tier ratings. A strength of the application was presenting an analysis of the problems parents currently encounter in accessing high quality care. A weakness was presenting a list of supports, many of which are good ideas, without addressing how they will address the problems identified. It is not clear why the GA Pre-K programs are not required to participate in the TQRIS. The targets are ambitious but evidence was not presented to make a case that they are achievable. No evidence was presented to support that

children in Early Head Start, Head Start, Part C and 619 are also participating in other programs as indicated in the table so they should have targets in B4c2 as well. Overall, this section had some strengths along with some significant weaknesses and was judged to be of medium quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	2

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The application does not demonstrate an understanding of a validation process. The application presented some interesting and important questions related to the operation of the TQRIS but most were tangential to the critical issue of establishing the validity of the TQRIS. A research plan that addressed the differential quality of each of the tiers was needed. The issues around the participation of GA Pre-K in the TQRIS are critical and merited more discussion. The concept of using the Kindergarten assessment for showing the relationship between TQRIS and child outcomes is a very poor design. A pretest measure is needed to examine the gains children make in programs. The proposed design does not relate children's progress to program participation tiers. The kindergarten assessment will only convey where children are after participation. It is not so clear why so much of the discussion was on a design related to dually enrolled children which is relatively minor issue for the validation. The attribution of impacts is part of program effectiveness, not validation. The proposed plan is of low quality showing limited understanding of how to validate the tiers or how to examine the relationship between the tiers and child outcomes.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	14

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The state has a long history of developing and improving its ELDS. The Kagan and Scott Little reports provide a thorough analysis of critical issues related to content and alignment. The commissioning of the analysis by the state is a strength but the application would have been stronger if it spoke more directly to what was learned from the analysis and implications for next steps. Evidence was needed that the ELDS are used by programs, including which programs use them and how. The application asserts that the ELDS are used in the development of IEPs but provides no evidence to support this. Given that revisions of the ELDS are underway and nearly completed, it would have been helpful if the application had discussed the identified shortcomings and how they are being addressed. Also, since the application states the revisions are nearly complete, more information about the revised ELDS needed to be included. The state is to be commended for describing the process for review of the new ELDS but the information presented did not make a strong case that the review process will result in revised ELDS that meet the application criteria. It was unclear in the description of the revision process and timeline as to whether the results of reviews would be incorporated into subsequent revisions. For example, it is a strength that there will be expert review for multicultural and linguistic appropriateness and for children with disabilities but it appears this takes place after the revisions are complete with no allowances for addressing shortcomings identified in the review. A stronger process would have been to make sure these perspectives were represented in the team charged with the revision. Similarly, the Kagan report noted some issues with alignment with the Work Sampling assessment but the process for addressing this finding was not presented. It was not clear how the curriculum reviews will be used. For example, if a curriculum is found to be poorly aligned with the ELDS, are state funded programs forbidden or discouraged from using it or is the outcome simply a set of reviews and programs decide what to do with the information? There do not appear to be any activities that address use of the curriculum reviews. The use of Georgia Public Broadcasting to assist with professional development is innovative. The state also proposes a range of supports for professionals to acquaint them with the revised ELDS including a state agency Standards and Curriculum coordinator. In sum, the plan as presented addressed the review criteria but more information was needed to conclude that the plan was of high quality. Implementation in this area was partial and the plan was of medium quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	8

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The state currently has some of the pieces in place from which to build a Comprehensive Assessment System but current implementation is limited. Although this section addresses some of the components of a Comprehensive Assessment System, the discussion does not provide evidence that the state has a vision for developing and supporting such a system statewide and across all programs serving young children. Current status for different programs is discussed separately and in different places. The state appears to have many possible avenues for screening and is rightfully concerned about duplication but does not appear to have any data or even recognize the need for data on how many children are being screened and who is being missed. There are several commendable activities around screening but the issue of coordination and how the various activities contribute to building an overall state system is not addressed. A data system to allow data sharing is planned but incentives (or requirements) for any program to use it are not addressed. The application recognizes the need for behavioral screening but no steps to implement activities to address this need are presented. The implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in a few sites is an appropriate response to behavioral needs but does not address how statewide screening will be implemented. Rather than develop their own PBIS model, more

efficient use of resources would have been a plan to implement an existing PBIS framework for preschool children since a well-researched model has been around for a number of years. Although the section asserts that the TQRIS will include the CLASS, it is not mentioned in the TQRIS manual. The application reports that GA Pre-K and the Annie Casey project use the CLASS which is a start but this does not address the issue of statewide use. Similarly, the use of a tool in the GA Pre-K program is a strength but the application needed to address issues concerning tool use, for example, by providing evidence of the appropriateness of the tool for multiple populations including children with disabilities, especially given that the state will be promoting its use in 619 programs. It is unclear why Pre-K will continue to use its self developed observation tool rather than using the tools in the TQRIS. Information on the validity and interrater reliability for Pre-K tools should have been presented. The discussion of professional development related to comprehensive assessment was piecemeal and did not make a case that it would be effective across sectors. The discussion revealed little understanding of the level of effort required to assist teachers in reliably administering assessments and using the results to improve practice, especially given the data presented on the current low levels of education in the child care sector. Much more attention to the details of how to move the system forward in this area was needed. Overall, the current activities indicate partial implementation. Based on the mixture of strengths and weaknesses in the section, the quality of what was proposed to move the state forward was judged to be of medium quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	7
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--</p> <p>(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;</p> <p>(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and</p> <p>(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)
<p>The application presents a description of several activities and projects that are ongoing in the state related to engaging and supporting families which provides a good foundation for the state moving forward. More information about some of these would have been helpful to understand exactly what they are trying to do and how many families are currently being reached by these projects. For example, the objective of Strengthening Families Georgia was not clear but it seems to have something to do with child welfare. Also, some of the projects described are K-12 projects which do provide a logical connection for expansion but the discussion also should have addressed how the unique needs of parents of younger children which will be addressed and what adaptations will be made for this population. The crosswalk in the appendix is interesting but the discussion does not address how it is to be used. It was difficult to assess the state's current level of implementation from the information presented but it appears to be very limited in that there is little statewide implementation. There is no evidence that the TQRIS will encourage programs to provide support to families so they can support their children's development. The TQRIS involves staff training on the 5 Protective Factors, but it is not clear how this then gets translated into parenting support for families. The home visiting grant could be a strong mechanism for the state in supporting families but was minimally described so it is not clear if the state sees the grant this way. How the cross sector teams in communities will support families was not adequately described; much more detail was needed. The use of Public Broadcasting is a strength as is the Family Connection Partnership but the plan needed more information about how these pieces contribute to the statewide strategy. Unfortunately, the application fails to convey an overall vision for family engagement including how the state is conceptualizing it. Some of the discussion addresses family involvement in policy committees, some addresses access to program information, some addresses supports for parenting. All of these can be part of a family involvement strategy but a state plan needs to recognize that these are very different outcomes addressed with different kinds of activities. The discussion also needed to address how the state plans to ensure that families in all programs are receiving supports, not just those attending programs which have a stated mission of supporting families. The current activities were considered to be partial implementation and the plan to move forward was deemed medium in quality.</p>

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;

(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The state has an existing framework which is quite thorough. The application recognizes the need to revise the framework based on the revision to the ELDS and provides a thorough description of the process that will be used for the revision. The process appears well suited to the task and likely to result in an aligned framework. The timeline and the source of resources are described strengthening the evidence that the process will achieve its intended result. A strength is that they plan to use grant resources to repeat the FIRST program, an incentive program for teachers, which has a proven track record. They also have recognized the need to integrate the two data bases and are working to do that. More information about how the Georgia Partnership will go about disseminating the framework would have been helpful. The application asserts that professional development will be targeted to programs that serve high needs children but no information is presented on how. The application reports that postsecondary coursework is aligned with the framework but more information on how this is verified would have made a stronger case. Several efforts involving postsecondary institutions were presented. The evidence suggests the state has already moved to substantial implementation in this area and the plan was medium to high quality

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	10

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The state has or is planning a number of different activities and strategies to support early childhood educators. A data-based discussion of some of the current barriers to improving the skills of the work force would have made a stronger case for what they are proposing. The registry seems to be for child care workers so it is not clear how the professional development levels of early childhood educators in other systems (e.g. Early Head start, home visiting) will be captured. There are many levels of training and many delivery mechanisms but these appear to be for child care professionals so it is not clear what exists or is planned to address the needs of professionals in other systems. This is a major shortcoming of the discussion in this section. The application asserts that online models aligned to the ELDS will be available in November 2011 but since the ELDS are in the process of being revised, it is not clear how this can happen. It appears the scholarships and incentives also are for child care

educators. Since the state has data indicating the quality of Pre-K also needs to be improved, there should be incentives for this workforce as well. Previous sections of the proposal discussed coaching and mentoring which were not mentioned in this section so it is not clear how integrated these strategies are into the state's overall vision for professional development. The professional development strategies addressed in this section do not provide for ongoing feedback which research shows to be important in improving skills, and improved skills is key to improved quality. The community of practice project is to be funded under the grant and is minimally described. More information was needed about how it would work, who would oversee it, and especially, what is the evidence that led the state to conclude this would be an effective professional development model for this population. The proposed data base appears to have the capacity to produce much needed information. The application presents a very nice discussion of the limitations of the current information which provides a good rationale for where the state needs to go next. It was not clear what will and will not be publicly reported and at what level of aggregation. Table D(2)(d)(1) was confusing and needed more narrative. The target for "Aligned institutions: universities" in 2015 is 25 but information was needed as to where this number comes from, for example, is that how many universities that state would like to see offer EC degrees or is that the number now offering them but they are not aligned. In general, the table would have been more powerful if accompanied by discussion on how the numbers were generated with some rationale as to why the state thinks it will be able to achieve its targets. The information at the bottom of the table about the underutilization of the registry was helpful but it also means that two indicators are being tracked: use of the registry and number of trained professionals. The state appears to not have a true baseline currently on the second. This section demonstrated that the state has partial implemented a system of supports for early childhood educators. The quality of the plan presented was seen as medium having some strengths but some weaknesses as well.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	7

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The state has several assessments in place from which it can build the planned Kindergarten Entry Assessment. A timeline for the development of the new assessment presents the steps and timing for the new assessment which is a strength. Unfortunately, the discussion does not provide evidence that the state understands the technical requirements for developing a valid and reliable assessment appropriate for use with diverse populations. The structure for the proposed tool is not described at all, i.e., will it be a one on one standardized direct assessment or observation based like Work Sampling? The discussion also does not mention what kind of scores will be provided (e.g., met criterion, a standard score, a percentage of items passed). As mentioned previously, the use of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to examine the effectiveness of preschool is an inappropriate use without information on the children's developmental status at entry to preschool. The discussion and timeline are silent on the issue of data entry and the development of a data base for the scores. It is not clear whether the teachers will be sending in paper scores sheets to the state to be entered later or entered online but either will require resources and planning. More detail is needed on how the longitudinal preschool study will provide the validation data for the kindergarten assessment. The psychometric analyses need to be computed during the assessment development

to allow for adjustments to items especially with regard to the validity of the measures for sub-populations such as dual language learners or children with disabilities. Content reviews for alignment with the ELDS will be needed at multiple time points as the content of the tool is revised. The \$200,000 estimate for continued operation of the system would have been stronger evidence for sustainability if documentation had been provided for how it was derived. There was no information provided on what activities the state sees as required to administer the implementation of the assessment in future years. The state has achieved partial implementation in this area. The plan presented has few strengths and many shortcomings and was considered to be of low medium quality.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	5

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state has partial implementation of a coordinated data system at this point in time. The state has several data systems in place from which to build which is a strength of the application. Other strengths are that the state is in the process of developing a P-20 longitudinal data base and will be assigning unique IDs to more children in addition to those in the GA Pre-K program. The data sharing agreements are impressive and indicate good initial communication across agencies has already taken place. Unfortunately, the application does not provide evidence that all of the essential data elements are to be in the early learning data system (or linkable across all systems). For instance, the application reports that the Pre-K programs have some demographic information and the state will be exploring adding such information to other systems. The state's vision involves data systems that have the essential elements but they are in different systems and will not be linked. The information in the appendix indicates that the cross agency data system only includes basic child and family data and program participation and so child data will not be able to be linked to a particular teacher or provider. The graphic for the data system clearly illustrates that the plans for the system do not include linking the educator data to the child data. The application also did not speak to the type of information that would be generated by the system and who would be able to access it. The only illustration of a question for the system presented in the narrative was what programs has the child attended? It is good that the state will be able to identify children being served by multiple programs but the application needed to present a much deeper understanding of the power of an early learning data system to generate timely, relevant information. The data systems in place constitute partial implementation but the quality of the plan to move the state toward a coordinated data system was on the low end of medium.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	139

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	0

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The state licensing system does not address programs caring for two or more children. The information presented indicates licensing begins at three children. The state has a plan for implementing a TQRIS for licensed programs with an increasing number of programs participating by June 2015 but the plan does not include targets for Department of Education programs and the targets for the other programs do not include all programs participating by 2015.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The state does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment and fewer than 70% of the points were awarded for E1. Neither criterion was met.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	

The application addressed the state's plan to improve its current system. For some components or elements, the plan was comprehensive and for others it was lacking in key features. The state's plan to implement a TQRIS, plan to improve the quality of the workforce, and plan to measure outcomes and progress were presented but the likely success of these plans was questionable based on the information presented. The application focused clearly on High Need children in general, but how the plan will address the unique needs of sub-groups such dual language learners and children with disabilities was inconsistently addressed. Nevertheless, the application did present a plan for improving the quality of early learning programs for children with high needs.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # GA-5009

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:12 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 19.

The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--

- (a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;
(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;
(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and
(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state of Georgia has created a goal of taking their education programs and services from Good to a Great system. This goal speaks of the high expectations this state has for the high quality of the services and programs that will benefit the children with high needs. It is important to have high expectations that will drive the outcomes of these programs in meeting the goal from good to great. The state has provided evidence on the financial investments from 2007 to the present. The state of Georgia has a wealth of investors and agencies that have provided funding to support the initiatives of this state's aim to provide meaningful services to children with high needs as well as the other special populations in this state. The state's use of subsidies was listed from various agencies, programs and services in the state. Many of the subsidies were earmarked to make increases in services and resources for the children with high needs. Each agency or department that contributed funding made a commitment in their letters of support and MOU. The state has contributed to the early learning and development in the amount of \$448,358,319(2011) in 2011, 9.2% increase since 2007. The state met its matching fund commitment with the Child Care and Development Fund. A (1) (B) The applicant provided information regarding the financial status of families in Georgia. The state has indicated that a high number of low-income families reside in the rural areas as well as sections of the inter city. Many of these areas have high numbers of children with high needs. Georgia states that it is 11th in percentage of low-income children from birth to five. The state provided statistics on the percentage of English Language Learners in their state which is 14.13%. The state provided data on the increase of the preschool, Head Start, and Early Head Start since 2007. The state indicated that 9.3% increase in preschool programs and a 6.6% in the Head Start Programs. The state's population has varied through the agency of Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) it indicated a drop in 2009 but increased in 2010 and 2011 to 39,180 of which 8.8% of this population is low-income. A (1) (C) The state selected DECAL as lead agency to oversee all of the grants operations and to monitor all programs, services, the implementation of activities and strategies as well as roles of participating agencies and organizations. Also the agency will be beneficial in assisting many of the child care programs to gain needed support such as licensing. This agency's services for regulations of child care providers will be an asset in helping to ensure that child care centers with meeting the regulations of the state's policies. This agency stated that most of the state's high needs population

receives services under their agency. The use of this network of programs and services that come from this agency will be a great resource for child care providers, preschool, families and children with high needs. The Georgia's Lottery for Education provided preschool and college scholarships to 750 children with high needs so they could participate in a preschool program. The state's lottery leads to many other private communities supporting this effort which the state of Georgia created a- universal preschool program. This initiative provided parents with more options to find quality program for their children. The use of the lottery increased the PreK programs to serve more children. The state's universal preschool program opens the doors for many more children to enter into preschool and receive an early learning experience. Georgia states that since the voluntary, universal state funded prekindergarten program began, it has served over one million children. Georgia has stated its credential requirements for the PreK classrooms in which teachers are required to have degrees in the field and their assistant must have a CDA. The state's early learning and development standards and the curriculum are aligned. The state requires health screening and referrals to be follow-up on for all children. The state implements a PreK assessment that is aligned with the Work Sampling System which is an observational and informative tool; it focuses on some cognitive domains. The state does not indicate the types of curriculum that are being implemented into the classrooms, even though they require alignment with the standards, the name indicates if the curriculum is state standards based. The state use of the online version of the Work Sampling System for the providers indicated that 50% of the PreK classes used this tool. The use of this process provides the state the opportunity to aggregate the assessment data. The state's use of the CLASS assessment tool that evaluates the environment and the interaction of adults-child in the classroom will be implemented into the programs. The state decided to implement this tool due to research results that indicated a need for improvement in teacher-child interactions. The teacher's interaction with her students is important: the child's needs, can be addressed if the teacher is in tune to the child's behavior. Children need to know that they are important and that their needs will be met. The state has another investment that meets for a high quality program called the Infant Toddlers Network. This network provides services to early care and education teachers with technical assistance, professional development, and mentor training. This service targets children from six weeks to three years of age that are in family day care homes, group homes, and child care centers. The use of the state TQRIS will focus on the following data to provide to Georgia, such as ratings of the quality of educational programs and the quality of care, as well as providing baseline information on programs. The state does not at the present have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The state has developed Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills(GKIDS) which they use as assessment for children that are in the kindergarten program: this information will be passed on to the first grade. Unfortunately, the preschool student will not have a portfolio of information provided to the kindergarten staff regarding the needs, the strengths and weaknesses. The use of a transition plan is important to bridge programs and teachers as well as families. The state of Georgia has provided the many sources of investment funding that support the state's initiatives and programs. The many agencies, organizations, and stakeholders have indicated their support and commitment in providing the projects of this grant with the necessary funding to implement the goals of meeting the needs of children. The use of matching funds has been indicated and other one-time investments that will support the sustainability of the grant when it ends are an important factor in keeping the necessary services that will enhance and impact children and families. The state has stated the licensing as well as the early learning and development standards along with a timeframe of implementing these standards. The state has provided an overview of the assessments that will be implemented into the preschool programs. The overall plan has provided a picture of the purpose and objectives of this grant. The many tables depicting the projects and outcomes were evidence of how each project and goal will be carried out. This is a high quality response.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state's first goal is to have programs of high quality enroll more children with needs. Secondly, Georgia hopes to transform its good system to a great system by increasing access to high quality programs and services for children with needs. The state is developing a data system that will expand during the course of the grant to provide sustainability. In the tables that summarize Georgia's ambitious plan, the state depicted the broad range of strategies that will be implemented to achieve the goals for a high quality plan. The state has a plan to assist in reaching the goals and projects that will be administer in the grant. The state use of innovative and challenging plans to sustain the system across all the counties will impact the information on children with high needs. The state will design a rigorous and independent evaluation of the state's RTT-ELC grant. The state outlines all of the agencies that have legislatively- mandated requirements and duties such as overseeing early environments, the re-authorization act of Head Start which involved the private and business community. The state of Georgia was a

recipient of the Race To The Top grant in 2010. As a result of this funding, Georgia created a P-20 State Longitudinal Data System which will link together many of their learning systems. The use of a strategy map was provided in the form of a table. This table depicted the projects and goals that are aligned with the projects. The state has developed 11 projects that are written in table form. The use of a governance structure will ensure that stakeholders will provide input on the services and programs that are for children with high needs. The state will ensure there is no duplication of services that ensure that children with high needs are receiving all the services needed. The duplication of programs eliminates the opportunity for other services to be utilized, and children sometimes receive the same types of services over and over again from the same program or agency. The use of the TQRIS will assist in providing data that will improve the quality of child care centers, family day care homes, and publicly funded child care programs, the feedback from the system will guide providers to strive for improving their programs and services. The state's TQRIS data will provide health and family services with information to disseminate to a variety of areas. The use of the system gives feedback to PreK programs on keeping high quality centers. The TQRIS will provide the state with data that will help measure the quality of progress across the state. Georgia's comprehensive assessment system will address the goal of closing the educational gap and increasing school readiness outcomes for children with high needs. This system will make connections and alignment for the children through education, health, and development, and family. The state had a study conducted to review the alignment of Georgia's early learning and development standards. Georgia is revising new birth through five standards using the results from the research. The state PreK programs use assessments that are required, the teachers use the Work Sampling System which is an informative assessment. The data use from this assessment is passed on to the kindergarten teacher. The PreK program also collects data on the environment. The state has provided in the study on Georgia Preschool Education where other assessments have been administered such as the ELLCO. The use of these other assessment in the study needs to be interwoven through this plan on assessments and data systems. Georgia's Department of Education and DECAL work closely with the family engagement projects and activities. These agencies have aligned the family engagement standards with the National PTA standards. Strengthening Families became a partner with Georgia's Family engagement to provide training for providers and activities for families. The data on the number or percentage of providers and families that participated would give insight on how effective some of the services are. The state did not indicate the population that was targeted for the family engagement, and services for families of other cultures and languages. The state is developing a cadre of early childhood educators with the background knowledge that will work with the workforce development plan. In the workforce plan are incentives for providers and teachers to further their educational levels. The state has issued new guideline for the education staff in the child care programs and preschool settings. The state indicated a timeline for teachers, teachers assistant, and directors for receiving CDA credential in child care settings. The state is requesting that lead teachers meet the bachelor degree or Montessori diploma requirement. In order to have high quality programs the teaching staff is essential to have the background knowledge to provide our children with the best service. If the staff is not of high quality the children will not have a high quality learning experience and will have less success in future educational settings. The use of the Professional Development Registry will assist educators in pursuing the credentials they need, by the data tracking system. The state's K-12 GADOE State Longitudinal Data System collects and corporate this data from the PreK programs to the kindergarten teachers. The state has formed many committees and subcommittees that will oversee the operations of the projects that are being implemented by various agencies and programs. The development of the TQRIS system that will provide significant information and data for program, providers, and services will assist in reviewing their program efforts. The key factor is for the TQRIS to provide the data for educators, providers, and parents. The information that will be reported by the TQRIS will benefit the grant by giving parents, communities, and educators necessary feedback on how their programs and their services are effective. The most important factor of the plan is that parents will have information that will assist them in selecting the right child care for their children with high needs. The state has a scope of how they will establish the data services for family and professional staff. The plan to use data as a feedback to assist in the revisions of their services, standards, and programs means that they are reflecting on the needs. The use of the TQRIS data system will provide the qualifications of educators which impacts the quality of centers, also lack of high quality teachers and centers will impede the achievement gap. This is a high quality response based on the numerous pieces of evidence provided.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	9

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

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

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

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

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

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children

with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

• A3 (A) 1 Organizing structure for management Georgia • The state of Georgia's governance structure is formed with many agencies, programs, committees, councils, teams and subcommittees that are committed to ensuring that all agencies will be in alignment with making sure those children with high needs will receive the necessary services. • The use of this structure also provides for stakeholders to participate and to coordinate inter-agency as well as resource allocations to assist children with high needs. • The state has provided a list of the parties that will be a part in the governance structure. The role for each of these parties is outlined such as the lead agency which is DECAL responsible for day-to-day operations of the grant and will provide staff support for the State Advisory Council. • Some of the duties listed under the parties are the coordination of the inter-agency to make sure all participation of the state agencies, system level coordination, achieving alignment and reducing duplication of services. • A committee that will advise the TORIS implementation and facilitate data sharing needs and help resolve issues that may occur between state agencies. • A committee that will oversee the projects under the Child and Family Outcomes and those children with high needs are represented in RTT-ELC projects. • A committee that will see that the Professional Development Registry and GATRAIN system are implemented. • The state's use of a subcommittee for the implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be monitored through workforce outcomes. • The state has indicated that all committees and subcommittee will remain in effect after the grant. This is providing continuous sustainability for the programs and services for all children in Georgia. • The state has included a graph of Georgia's Early Learning and Development, Governance Structure, and a table that delineates the specific activities and estimates completion dates for each activity related to the governance structure. • The governance plan that Georgia has developed will be a roadmap to completing their goals and ensuring their commitment to children with high needs. The use of committees, agencies, action teams, and subcommittees will each play a significant role in making sure that the grant will be implemented and all commitments will be honored. • A (3) a3 • The state will use this grant and the scope of work as a blueprint for Georgia's early learning and development system for the four years and beyond. • The state agency will have an Early Learning and Development Manual developed with details all of the various parties that are participating in the grant. • The state has a large group of stakeholders that have been involved with the proposal of this grant. The stakeholders groups consist of representatives from all participating agencies, program directors, and teachers. The state also had state legislators from both political parties in attendance at the group meeting of stakeholders. The use of teachers to be a part of the group meeting is very important. This grant affects them more because they are the teaching force that will be working with families and children with high needs. There was a large group of stakeholders that met three times in regards to this proposals it was estimated 80 members from 60 organizations. It is important to have everyone buy into the plan. • The state has included 64 letters of support by many of the organization and agencies who are committed to the grants vision of increasing the number of children with high needs. The state has a large amount of support for this grant's initiatives this is evident in the letters of support and the commitment with MOU. The state has appointed a lead agency that will oversee the operations of the grant along with other state agencies. Establishing the committees will assist in making sure that commitments are kept by the agencies of their services. The use of a governance structure is the road map they will follow to implement the projects and goals of the grant. The state's selection of various groups to be on the stakeholders' committee that include people from the communities and families as well as the private sector. The buy in of everyone to participate shows a strong interest from the supporters and the interest they have in making sure Georgia meets the high need of their children. The high quality plan is Substantially or Fully implemented.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	10

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Georgia has a large net of financial systems that provided funds to assist with programs and resources for the children with high needs. The use of the grant will help increase the number of children with high needs and expand the programs and services. • The use of the DECAL that coordinates the resources from multiple funding streams to help provide families with high quality comprehensive services that promote healthy development of their preschool and school age children. • The grant provides a list of agencies that contribute to the funding initiative. Georgia's outstanding support in funding allows the state to expand and increase services and programs for children and families. The use of the lottery program is one example of the way this program impacts so many educators and preschool families in this state. • The state has provided tables that depicted the leverage of federal, state, local and private resources and the funding streams. Also, the tables indicated the activities and services as well as the alignment with outcomes in the state plan. • The state of Georgia has outlined in each of their 11 projects how the programs and services will be sustained after the grant is completed. • The state's indicated that current infrastructure will be stronger after the grant and will have increased the number and percentage of children with high needs who will continue to access high quality early learning and development programs which promote more kindergarten success. The state feels that the children with high needs ready to enter kindergarten will have an impact on the achievement gap. • The state's governance structure will continue after the grant. The use of the evaluation components that are in the high quality plan will allow agencies to provide data that will provide feedback on where the greatest impact occurred. • The Kindergarten Entry Assessment will continue after the grant, so that the learning measure of Georgia's early learning and development programs can continue. This is so vital for the preschool children entering into kindergarten as well as for the teachers, parents, and providers. • The state feels that the real sustainability of the grant by 2015 that more children will have access to high quality programs; this was built into the funds from RTT-ELC. The state has addressed funds that will target various needs of the state, such as the assessments and the projects. The use of funds to provide professional development was indicated and funds that will continue to support this effort after the funding ends will continue through other agency funds. The state has numerous funding channels that are willing to step in after the grant ends to continue some of the needed services for our children and families. The scholarship funds are provided to assist providers in furthering their education level, which is one of the incentive programs that are being offered through the state. The need to establish a kindergarten entry level is an important factor in assisting our young learners as they enter into kindergarten. Otherwise, students with high needs will not be identified and have the early intervention that is necessary for the student to have a successful learning experience. The cost factor of this assessment at \$200,000 to be implemented is a question. There are many factors that are not included such as the cost of administrating and training on this assessment project. This is of medium high quality response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	9

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

Georgia's TQRIS was developed from stakeholders' and other agencies' input. The use of this system will provide ratings for quality care and for educational programs in different settings. Also, the TQRIS will coordinate and align the projects throughout the state for program quality. The state provides a list of standards and quality dimensions that will be utilized by the TQRIS. The TQRIS standard have been reviewed by experts from FPG • Georgia's high quality plan and the TQRIS are represented in the tables provided. Each of the projects is listed with outcomes, strategies, key goals, and key activities that include a rationale, timeline and parties responsible. These tables give a clear view of the projects and the sustainability of the TQRIS. • The states standards will be revised and aligned with the TQRIS. The new standards will be released in February 2012. The state will provide training and technical assistance to the child care resource and referral agencies along with Georgia Public Broadcasting on the correct use of the standards. A chart is attached demonstrating the TQRIS program standards and early learning and development criteria. • The state is using a comprehensive assessment system that is based on the Georgia PreK model which incorporates the Work Sampling System that is aligned with the state early learning and development standards. • The state's early childhood educators' qualifications will be used in the TQRIS standard one. All teachers' qualifications are verified into the Georgia Professional Development Registry with career levels. This registry will provide the state a view of the teaching staff and the levels of education obtained. Also provide teachers that are certified in the teaching field or other related fields on the other educational levels. The state can use this registry is a tool educators can use to see where they need to move for more educational opportunities. The state can use this tool to see the various levels of their staff and to see the progress that is being made by staff as well as who is not meeting qualifications. • A table is included showing the TQRIS point system that depicts the education and development criteria and the levels of ratings good, very good and excellent. • The state understands the importance of parent involvement in their children's education and the impact that it has. The TQRIS will provide information on the professional development that will engage families. This will be accomplished through the Strengthening Families Assessment tool to gauge the parental readiness, and knowledge of parenting and child development here are some of the topics in the assessment. • The use of the TQRIS to gather information from programs on the demographic and socioeconomic data on the children in preschool program will be of value. This data information allows the DECAL to look at the child's demographic at the level TQRIS has and will indicate the support that will be given to the programs that service children with high needs, as well as foster children, English Language Learners, children with disabilities, children of migrant workers, and other children receiving state services. This system helps to narrow down the target areas, and provide direct services to the areas that need it the most. • The state gives an outline of the licensing system that is under DECAL Child Care Services Division and their responsibilities. The state has provided categories to assist in recognizing licensed or registered child care. In order to be eligible for the TQRIS there are requirements that must be met, There are about five which include that the child care programs must be licensed/registered for a minimum of 12 months, registration of all staff members in the Professional development registry. The TQRIS has one goal is regarding the ongoing license compliance study and licensing compliance revisions process. Through the state's compliance study and licensing project, more child care programs (about 640) have moved from non-compliant licensing status to compliant. This is a 90% success rate for sustaining improvement. This is a high quality plan that will help to eliminate child care centers that are operating without licenses, are not in compliance, and are not providing high quality care. The regulating of child care licensing will increase the high quality programs for children with high needs as well. Substantially Implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The lead agency, DECAL, established some policies to support the participation in the TQRIS by any licensed or registered child care programs or any publicly-funded programs not licensed by the department. This is an opportunity for publicly funded programs to gain licensing and be part of the TQRIS, so that parents will have the opportunity to view the ratings of their centers. The state is extending an offer to Early Head Start and Head Start to participate. Many of the Head Start programs come under federal guidelines and must meet their regulations. The TQRIS listed the eligibility requirements to become part of the program. The state's COMPASS system allows parents to apply for services online such as food stamps and programs for families with high needs through the agencies that provide these services. It is called the one-stop-shop that has provided services for 93% of families who applied for a child care subsidy. This is a fast way for parents to receive services, but the parents that do not have access to computer/skills or have a language barrier may find this difficult. The TQRIS is responsible for the incentives that will be given to child care programs. The tiered reimbursement incentive is linked to the program, not the child, and is based on the number of children receiving the CAPS subsidy served by the program. The children that are in the CAPS are mostly children with high needs. The state informs that the higher the TQRIS level, the higher the percentage of children with needs, the higher the incentive. The state provides teachers and programs that have high quality programs key incentives. The use of a list that outlined three areas : first, to maintain high quality programs; second develop administrators and teachers that reach the highest tier and receive individual incentives to offset the labor cost for educators, and, third maintaining program supplies and equipment. The state has established a plan to implement, collaborate, and encourage other programs to become a part of the TQRIS system. The state gives an overall review of what is available for the providers through the tiered system and explains how they are to achieve the various tiers for incentives and support. The family engagement is another factor for which the state has provided programs that will support the needs of families. The idea of a one stop data system where parents, professionals, and programs can retrieve information is a safeguard from overlapping services. The state needs to address those families that do not have access to computers or have the technical skills to use this data online. The state use of funding sources and the large number commitments from agencies along with the programs, and services being developed will assist in achieving their ambitious goals for the families and children of high needs. However, state needs to focus on the rural areas that do not have the facilities to provide this type of service. There are some programs that are not being implemented in a time frame that will benefit the high need of children, educators, and programs. This is a medium quality response that is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	13

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

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

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

Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state of Georgia will be using a variety of assessment tools for rating and monitoring the training programs. The focus will be on measurement tools, quality of indicators, number of tiers, data to be collected, personnel infrastructure and compliance procedures, validity of assessors and the interactions among participants, parents and TQRIS system and DECAL staff. The use of parents and participants to be a part of the rating and monitoring system provides important feedback on the grant. The group's responses will indicate how effective their roles and responsibilities have been in making changes in the programs and projects. The use of the TQRIS will evaluate the state's standards using an online self-reported portfolio system which requires programs to submit the assessments and compliance standards. The TQRIS will make this information available to the state and other agencies. The types of assessments will be environmental which are the CLASS and ERS. The use of these assessments will be piloted in Toddler and Preschool classrooms that will make them accountable for their interaction between teacher-child. The state will use several other assessment tools that will evaluate the space, personal care routines, Language-Reasoning-Listening Talking, and parents and staff via the ITERS-R, ECERS-R and FCCERS-R. Another tool called the SACERS will include health and Safety and space/furnishings and most important Special Needs as well as staff development. All of the scales will evaluate inclusive, culturally diverse programs that will provide data on the children such as English Language Learners and low-income from the various areas, including rural areas and the inner city. The state requires that the ERS observation be every three years. The TQRIS will implement the ERS in one-third of the classrooms, one-third of the ITERS-R classrooms, one-third of the ECERS-R classrooms, one-third of the Georgia's PreK classrooms, and in centers that have PreK, one-third of the school-age classrooms. The state will have additional classrooms to meet the one-third total of classroom requirements for the research study. The use of these assessments tools in the various classrooms ensures that all age groups are included. The state indicates that the remaining classrooms will be included in a random assessment if needed. The state's assessments of one-third of the classrooms should be expanded over the course of grant years. There are some areas in the assessment that address parents, and special needs children and their data will be necessary in making improvements and changes in the programs. The use of the DECAL website that will post the ratings from TQRIS will be made available at the Parent Referral Centers. This is an opportunity for parents to review these rating from the referral center in order to select the appropriate setting for their children, especially parents that have children with special needs or disabilities. The state provided various assessments that will be administered in various preschool programs. The state is doing a self-evaluation on the impact of the assessments and also the outcomes. The state has utilized the TQRIS to assist in reaching educators, parents, and programs. The state will pilot assessments that will be administered in various classrooms to gather data on the effective and the outcomes. Substantially implemented and high quality response

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

(B)(4) The use of providing rating programs ensures that children with high needs as well as all preschool children will receive the appropriate services. B4a The state offers free on site technical assistance from the child care resource and referral agencies and technical assistance partners; this is available to all programs. The use of TQRIS will be supported by approximately 60-75 technical assistance consultants based in Georgia's child care resource and referral agencies and other TQRIS technical partners. The plan is to encourage directors and owners of child care programs to participate in TQRIS as well as to complete the orientation. Also, the state use of a four hour course will be offered at least monthly starting in January 2012 for the child care and referral agencies in the area. The use of TQRIS support is also available to providers through the TQRIS Help Desk and via email. The state's Infant and Toddler Network established a mentor program for family child care teachers and

center-based teachers serving high needs infant and toddlers. The state use of another strategy to improve and sustain quality in infant and toddler programs will make a sound impact with providers and families. The use of the incentive package will be distributed by the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, a statewide non-profit with a local community collaborative in all 159 counties in Georgia. The chart depicted the type of financial incentive, including a description of the incentive program and eligibility for it. Many of the incentives will enhance program services for staff and children with high needs. The use of incentives brings an appreciation for the input and services that providers and teachers provided for our most vulnerable learners. The plan also provided a graph of the QRIS Participation Rewards Program. The use of funding from the RTT-ELC combined with Georgia's TQRIS will help working families who have children with high needs to access high quality programs through the following supports:

- Child Care subsidy bonuses (tiered reimbursement) linked to TQRIS participation.
- Policy review aimed at programs seeking to serve Children with High Needs
- Summer transition programs for three and four year old
- Transportation and meals provided to children enrolled in Georgia's PreK programs.
- ALLGAKIDS referral line to support parents of children with high needs in locating high quality programs
- Spanish speaking referral staff available
- Free inclusion Coordinator Services provided through the local child care resource and referral agencies offer assistance in locating appropriate childcare for with disabilities and program supports once a child with disabilities has enrolled
- Free professional development provided by a pediatric nurse practitioner to programs serving children with special healthcare needs.
- Free professional development, mentoring and coaching and financial incentives for the programs rated "very good" or "excellent" that actively recruit children with disabilities
- The Common Point of Access to Social Services (COMPASS) system promotes access for children with High Needs to programs that can accept child care subsidy payments. This online system allows a parent or guardian to apply for childcare subsidy online and then receive case management service via the telephone
- TQRIS materials developed in Spanish
- Partnership with cultural associations and refugee association, such as the Latin American Association, to support community education, engagement, and recruitment for TQRIS.

The supports listed above have capture all the most vital services parents could possible need in making sound decisions regarding their child's needs. The overall support systems in this program will enhance and impact educators, administrators, communities, schools, families, children, and child care providers with the array of services. The state's expectation is that all Georgia's PreK program will participate in the TQRIS by 2015. The state indicate with the plan by 2015 90% of Georgia's PreK will be rated. The state provided data on the basis of enrollment that approximately 44,067 children will be served in rated programs. The state has provided a list of technical assistance programs that will work with the TQRIS. The various systems will provide information on the agencies that provide various services that the families and providers can access. The collaboration of Georgia's technical assistance will assist in gathering data that will support the school system PreK programs and families in receiving the information that will enhance the educational services of our children. The state substantially implemented with high quality responses.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state has a mission to provide reflective research and to make continuous updates and improvements to the TQRIS and the quality programs. The state's DECAL will use both independent and internal research capabilities. DECAL will take a random representative sample of 200 child care programs (including both child care centers and family day care homes) for the analysis. The program developed a set of questions for the evaluation; these questions will govern the type of data needed that will impact the services by TQRIS. The state will conduct through TQRIS a small study, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore ways to best incorporate Georgia's school-based PreK. The use of the study will be significant due to the large number of PreK programs in the areas. The applicant indicated that this is essential for the state's PreK programs to be involved and without the school-based settings it will be difficult for them to achieve the goals. The state needed a different approach for school-based PreK TQRIS inclusion with an exploratory research study. The study plans to examine how TQRIS ratings are linked to developmental gains the students have made on the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The study's set of question will provide feedback to support revisions and refinements to the TQRIS Program Standards. The developed questions centers around the impact on children of attending medium to low tier birth to four programs according to the TQRIS and a comparison of PreK or Head Start classrooms on child's school readiness. The state has a target of revising the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to provide accurate data and create a portfolio on the preschool students and children with needs. The use of the four year research will target on the movement of programs across levels and approaches and types of support and intervention necessary to move a program one or two levels. The plan will focus on collecting two types of data:

- External – overall TQRIS linked to school readiness
- Internal – TQRIS improvement will provide improvement data on how to support programs using levels, dosage, and type of support/interventions that most influence movement across levels. The use of this research will provide valuable and concrete feedback on the TQRIS's impact on the state's

Children with High Needs. The applicant's use of an evaluation system that will link assessments and licensing, and professional development ensures that the projects and goals are accomplished by constant feedback on program practices and procedures. The TQRIS question number six states it will utilize the Kindergarten Entry Assessment; when this has been developed and revised. This cannot be applied at the current time. The absence of this assessment tool will impact the data available to programs and services, especially the kindergarten and preschool programs. The state has indicated through its self evaluation what its needs are in the assessments for the preschool population and developed some questions to address these issues. They also indicated two types of data needed for external and internal validity. The state decided to bring in research that would give feedback on the various types of assessments that would benefit their goals. The feedback would provide them with the effective outcomes of the assessments and whether the assessments will address the needs of children with high needs. The response is high quality.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

C1The state target will be to align Georgia Performance Standards for elementary grades with preschool programs standards. The state had a specific focus on ensuring that developmental and conceptual continuity between the standards existed for all children from birth through 12th grade. The state coordination efforts to develop and implement standards that ensure alignment within the standards for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children through third grade are needed for child care providers to have a road map to implement the curriculum being used and activities that are being developed. The state established first the PreK Learning Goals in 2002 which later became the PreK Content Standards. Again in 2005, the standards were revised and the GaDOE introduced the Georgia Performance Standards. The revision of the standards includes Georgia Performance Standards for Kindergarten which will focus on correlation, information about inclusive settings, and additional resources for teachers. An alignment was done in 2007 between preschool and kindergarten, a crosswalk was created to show the correlations of PreK indicators, the Georgia Performance Standards for Kindergarten, and the Head Start standards including how they relate to the expectations in kindergarten. The state decided in 2007 to do a review of the standards which included the updates for the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and the language used in relation to the Kindergarten Georgia Performance Standards. The review brought attention to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness in the document. The state's DECAL monitors the PreK programs annually and provides yearly documentation of grant implementation and the use of the standards. Professional development is utilized to ensure that correct use of the standards is being

demonstrated by program directors and classroom staff, which includes face-to-face modules and online training. The use of the standards is required in lesson planning for Georgia's PreK programs, and these standards have been endorsed by Georgia Department of Education and recommended for use in all state-funded Preschool Special Education Programs for four years olds. The use of the standards is in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP) goals. The state's PreK Content Standards are directly aligned with the Georgia's PreK Child Assessment. The use of The Work Sampling System (WSS) is the core component of Georgia assessment. All Georgia's PreK programs and kindergarten teachers will be using the online version of Work Sampling System by school year 2014-2015. C1c The DECAL formed an advisory committee to develop Georgia's Early Learning Standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The committee duty was to develop a set of appropriate, attainable learning goals for children from birth through age three that aligned with Georgia's existing PreK Content Standards, Head Start Standards, and Kindergarten Standards. The state's DECAL passed a new licensing rule effective September 8, 2010 that all licensed child care and registered family day care programs provide a daily planned program of variety as well as developmentally appropriate activities that promote the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language and literacy development of each child. A study was conducted to identify areas of strengths and weakness regarding the alignment of the standards. The use of this study developed a scientifically rigorous guide to assist in the revisions of the standards. After the study the state recognized the need to have one set of standards developed across children from birth through five that covers all domains. The plan to revise and align with the study began in July 2011 and expectations are that the standards will be released in September 2011. The applicant provided a chart with the organizational framework of GELDS. C1d Using funding from the Early Learning Challenge Grant, DECAL will hire a Standards and Curricula Coordinator who will be responsible for the roll-out of the newly revised GELDS and for the development and implementation of professional development and resources about the effective use of the GELDS to support learning outcomes. The use of Georgia Public Broadcasting will produce five series of live streaming professional development sessions that cover the GELDS, and GPB has a long history of partnership with DECAL and GADOE. The Broadcasting will begin in September 2011 with the first series covered being the professional development sessions on the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. The use of workshops will be aired in January 2012. The use of online training will be available for Kindergarten teachers. The state will have a train-the-trainer module to use with TCSG instructors across the state regional continuing education courses in GELDS. The state's constant revising of the standards will impact the curriculum and the additional cost on professional development for all staff. The state's focus should be clear as to what the standards and curriculum will cover, and whether it will meet the needs of the population served. The state is providing various standards to be aligned with other programs such as PreK, Head Start, and Kindergarten programs. The bridging of the preschool programs with other public programs are supportive of their effort to provide continuity throughout the state's program standards. The state explains the essential domains that will be administered and covered in the standard and alignment with the assessments such as the Work Sampling system. The state's lead agency will provide annual reports on the assessments and outcomes of the children and the services received. The state also included that the information regarding their trainings, assessments, parent involvement and other services to the communities will be channel through the Georgia Public Broadcasting system. The state is very aware of the need to have feedback on assessments and other services which drive the instruction and improvements of the program. The state main focus is to have their standards aligned with validated and national standards. Substantially implemented and high quality response

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	18

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

C (2) The state has indicated that in order to provide effective and meaningful services to children with high needs and to provide high quality programs, early intervention and identification through assessments and screenings are necessary. The state's PreK program standards contain all element of a comprehensive assessment system. Georgia requires that within 90 days of enrollment children participating in PreK must have proof of recent health screenings such as hearing, vision, and dental. Behavioral and developmental screenings will be administered through other agencies. The use of informative assessment to monitor and guide instruction is achieved through the use of the Work Sampling System that is aligned with the states early learning standards. The results from the assessments inform teachers and administrators of the needs of their programs and the services for children. A graph was designed to depict the comprehensive assessment model. The state's Children 1st program is Georgia's Single Point of Entry to a statewide collaborative system of public health and other prevention-based

programs and services designed to screen and identify children (age's birth through five) who are at risk for poor health and developmental outcomes. Georgia's Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program conducts screenings and provides referrals and follow-up to ensure that the needs of children and families are met. There are other public health department who provide screening for Head Start and Early Head Start on for early learning and development. The TQRIS places screenings as a high priority as well as an indicator and recommends the use of the Ages and States Questionnaire and Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional tools for family child care and center-based providers. The use of the Work Sampling System is an informative assessment tool that provides feedback and also evaluates how children are learning. This data will be supportive for the use of informing the teacher about the individual student's academic, personal and social, and other cognitive achievements. The state will provide programs serving children ages 3-5 years with disabilities a variety of informative assessment tools to use in developing individual educational plans (IEPs) and tracking student progress. The state Department of Education recommends the use of Work Sampling Online. Seventy of 186 local education agencies (350 sites serving 5,286 students) use WSS as the formative assessment tool for their Preschool Special Education. The use of a study on professional development will be the basis for rolling out a professional development model that can be linked to student outcomes. Georgia's funds from the grant will target several key projects that will focus on a comprehensive assessment system that will build on existing resources and investments in the state. These projects will be added to the work on assessment in TQRIS which are outlined in Section B. The state will use ELC grant funds, to support community demonstrations sites for the implementation of positive behavior interventions. Also, through this project funding effort will be made to address the issues of poor social and emotional skills that are barriers that impact high quality early learning and development environment. The state needs to address the importance of changing the alignment of informative assessments and the revisions of the Georgia Early Learning Development Standards which are constantly being changed. Establishing strategies to assist in alignment and will impact the results of the assessment. The state indicated it uses a self-administered tool which is monitored by the PreK consultant, provide explanation of the reason for the administration of the tool and results. The state mentioned that the outcomes of the professional development study will assist in the roll-out of the new professional development what types of outcomes not included. The state will review and revise the standards for professional development and assessments. The state explains the use of the various assessments such as informative and environmental as well as interaction between adult and child assessment tools. The state will use the data system to provide the necessary feedback to teachers and parents on the program quality. The state use of information provided teachers and programs will assist them in making the essential and necessary improvements. Substantially implemented and high quality response.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	18

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

C4 Engaging and Supporting Parents The state of Georgia has provided agencies that will support their family support component and the funding streams that are needed. These agencies include the DECAL, GaDOE, DPH, DHS, and Governor's Office for Children and Families that provide involvement for families with Children with High Needs. The state has found that valuing the input of families is necessary for the children's early learning experiences. The use of the Strengthening Families Georgia (SFG) ensures that young children in foster care are enrolled in quality early learning and development programs; these guarantee educational placements for children involved with the child welfare system. A strong emphasis on Strengthening Families services impacts the child welfare practices, and policies, and training caseworkers, supervisors, and foster care as well as parents in the SFG approach. The use of SFG services has provided a video on child abuse that has been state approved for child care trainers that integrate the SFG protective factors. The program works closely with the early childhood systems to disseminate information about protective factors in child care. The state use of these programs and services give voice to protect the rights of our children speaks volumes. The use of the video and trainers will keep parents, teachers, administrators, other agencies, and child care providers abreast of the current issues that face our children and families. The numerous activities that are afforded parents will increase the engagement of parents in their children educational experiences. The use of the activities will benefit parents by building levels of knowledge for them to make healthy and sound decisions on their children's future. Some of the activities outlined in the plan are the "Parents' Cafes" which will engage parents to communicate with other families. The state sponsored its first Family Forum in Atlanta and at four local sites across the state with more than 200 parents and professionals attending. The conference provides avenues for parents to communicate with professionals and gain some insight on the various issues and needs they are facing with the educational opportunities for their children. The state has provided opportunities for parents and local communities to form partnerships with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership a statewide initiative to developed and identify local needs and create a plan of

action. There are 159 counties in Georgia that have established collaborative groups that consist of public and private that are committed in improving the quality of life for children and families through cross the state. The state's Superintendent of Schools sponsors a Parent Advisory Council which meets several times a year. The council consist of parents who have children in the Title I schools and some members must have children from birth to five. The parents have roles and responsibilities to increase the number families to become involved in the engagement of the parents. Some of the members of the Parent council provide input on policies, projects, and materials that impact students and their families and bringing back to their communities important information and resources to strengthen family engagement. The state's Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visitation program focuses on the diverse needs of children and families in communities at risk. The services of the program are invaluable to the state for improving child and family outcomes and by addressing the significant barriers that affect the well-being for Children with High Needs and their families. A table outlining the TQRIS Standard for Family Partnership was provided. TQRIS has made requirements that 50-100% of staff in programs participating in their system complete the Strengthening Families "Protective Factors" training with the percentage increasing from 50% at level one "Good" to 100% at level three "Excellent". The use of the Georgia Public Broadcasting provides opportunity to reach out to families of Children with High Needs. The network reaches more than 3.6 million households through television and countless others through radio to connect people throughout the state. The use of the GPB provides 3500 hours of literacy and research-based educational programming especially for children with high needs and the families through GPD Kids Programming. The program provides data on the percentage of families by their in-come levels that view the programming. The state use of funding will provide GPB to provide messages and other network services to parents of other language such as Koran, Russian and Vietnamese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Urdu. These languages are those most commonly spoken in the Georgia areas. (A table for High Quality Plan to Increase Family Engagement was displayed.) This table indicated the projects that are related to the Family Engagement plan. The parents of other languages feel may feel intimidated when attending meetings in the schools or preschool setting; materials that are translated and a translator if possible will impact the engagement of families in activities. The state provides information on the various programs and services that will support the parents. The state uses various activities that will engage parents to participate in trainings, services, and programs. The use of parents input on various projects and goals that will affect their children will give value to the families. Substantially implemented and high quality response.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	18

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

(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;

(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The state of Georgia has put a great effort into developing a workforce that will encompass incentives, trainings, scholarships and technical assistance. These factors will be important to the workforce knowing that the work they do is appreciated and valued. The state in the last decade has made significant efforts to improve the quality of states early learning and development workforce; there are still challenges in the professional care for children birth to five and the need for improvement of school readiness still exist. The state will use funds to address these important issues by designing a data system that will allow the state to gauge professional development needs. The use of various projects stated previously will create coaching and mentoring programs in all regions of the state with focus on rural populations. A study was conducted. The results were 77% of lead teachers in classrooms reported that their highest level of education was a high school diploma. Georgia is proposing a project that will build coaching mentoring programs in all regions of state with a focus on the rural populations. In many instances these areas are overlooked. The state will target specific training needs of the state and increase the opportunities to further professionalize the individuals working with Georgia's youngest and neediest children. The professional development system is designed to track workforce development and needs and provide supports for increasing formal education and professional development by implementing policies that raise the education level of the state's workforce. The state will use two components to address these challenges a Trainer/Training Approval Registration and Approval System (TRAS) and secondly, the Professional Development Registry (PDR). The plan states that the TRAS System maintains an online calendar of approved statewide

professional development opportunities offered in English and Spanish Topics. The system will provide three different levels (beginners, intermediate and advanced). The state will use a variety of services such as the GATRAINS, the TRAS, and DPF to assist in monitoring and gauging the strengths and needs of the ELD workforce as well as identify professional development gaps. GATRAINS will be a one-stop shop for teachers looking for training at a particular level and addressing a particular competency. (Included a small table depicting the ELD professional and the Minimum Credential Requirements) This plan will be a significant on the impact of the education workforce as well as the programs and services for our targeted children. The state use of the incentive program will provide teachers, providers, administrators, and teacher assistant with opportunity to enhance their education and educational knowledge. The plan to increase incentives has several programs and services to assist staff, such as the SCHOLARSHIP and INCENTIVES programs designed to help with credentialing. The First-time Incentive Raising Standards for Teachers (FIRST) programs funded through federal dollars has awarded 2,272 individual early childhood professional a total of \$2,726,400 for attending a first time credential in early childhood education. Each individual received \$1200 for completing their first credential or formal degrees in the field of early childhood education. The applicant provided a chart that depicts the Career Levels of the DPR which have 12 levels based on educational experience. The state indicted that in less than 15 months the DPR services to staff have made an increase of 12,000, early education professional participating in the new system. The use of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, private colleges, Technical College System of Georgia, private community based trainers, and the state Professional Standards Commission are key partners with DECAL in supporting the education of the ECE workforce. All the postsecondary institutions and state-approved professional development providers overtly align coursework with the competency framework. The state address the need for the incentive programs to motivated educators. Substantially implemented and quality high response.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

(D)(2) The state indicated that their child care workforce is diverse and is constantly changing with the current population. The state child care licensing rules require a minimum of 10 hours of annual competency based trainings but 31% (957 of 3100) of programs did not receive the annual training hours. The state will develop method to provide accurate and sustainable training for staff. The staff needs to have trainers that have been approved which provide security for the staff that they will receive the training in best practices approaches for children, maintain knowledge skills and competencies the most important part of the trainings that they are effective and meaning for the staff. The use of several agencies such as GATRAIN, PDR and TQRIS has been outlined in the previous sections will assist in this workforce task. The funding of incentives will increase the quality of the workforce and encourage educational staff to have the desire to further their educational experiences and levels. The professional development and funds will spread into all the areas of the child care field, such as in the family center, home and private child care and other preschool programs. The funding agencies will direct their funds to ensure that the appropriate staff receives the necessary incentives in assessing with the cost of additional educational training. The use of RTT-ELC funds will support the state in gathering and reporting data regarding professional development, advancement and teacher retention. However, state has no tool to track training implemented in the state. The only process of calculating the 10 hours is manually. The state will have to encourage childcare programs to look into the different services for Professional Development to find out the attendance of staff. The state prepared a chart with targeted and goals on the increasing number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credential from postsecondary institution and professional development providers with programs that aligned with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state's tracking of staff attending professional development trainings seems to be an issue with keeping attendance. The state did not indicate if any surveys were development for feedback or input from the working force that are being targeted. The low credential in some of the child care programs are a issue. High quality programs need high quality

teachers that will impact the youngest learners. The state indicates the professional training that will be provided. The use of other institutions or colleges to assist with the credential of staff is a workforce incentives. The workforce framework is developed and will be aligned with the standards. The state will use a tracking system to assist with the problem on the attendance of staff. The state has indicated the various providers that will receive training and the number of hours. Partially implemented and medium-quality response

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>E1The state is in the process of developing a Kindergarten Entry assessment to be administered when preschool children enter into the kindergarten programs. At the present time the state has created an assessment tool called the GKIDS that assess only children that are already in the kindergarten program. The kindergarten assessment will be completed during the first two months of the Kindergarten year. The kindergarten entry assessment will be used to inform state, local, and programmatic leaders with vital information regarding children's readiness. The state will align the Kindergarten Entry Assessment with the revised Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards. The GKIDS serves as an informative assessment that is administered in to kindergarten students. The GKIDS focuses on seven domains: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Approaches to Learning, Personal AND Social Development and Motor Skills. The GKIDS assessment was field tested in the 2007-2008 school year in 23 schools (185 kindergarten classrooms) The teachers were trained in implementing this assessment as well the Georgia PreK assessment. Statewide teacher will receives support in implementing the assessments and a video of modules and administration manuals provided. A chart depicting the Measuring Outcomes and Progress was included, with Project levels outcomes, State Strategy, the project number key goals and key activities and rationale. The GADOE will consult periodically with the Technical Advisory Committee on the progress of the development in creating a kindergarten entry assessment. The state developed a timeline with assessment projects and trainings for teachers and professional staff. The timeline will provide a road map for ensuring that proposed activities and assessments will be implemented. The DECAL will incorporate all the state's PreK students (86,000) in the Longitudinal Data system so that PreK data links to K-12 data. The state use of the GKIDS tool will provide necessary feedback for the kindergarten teacher of students that are attending the program. The preschool children and children with needs will be handicapped when entering into the kindergarten program, there is no portfolio on these students. The state has developed a PreK assessment that has been implemented, however, there are no the results on the effective of the outcomes that provide more information on the impact on children for school readiness. Partially implemented and medium quality response.</p>

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

? E2The state has made significant progress with linking all 86,000 of Georgia's PreK students (including those students in private providers' settings) to GaDOE L-12 Longitudinal Data System. Also other agencies that will be linked to this system are Babies Can't Wait and Preschool Special Education. The data collected will expand the TQRIS system. The state will establish a Cross Agency Child Data System that will house a child's unique identifier along with the programs in which the child participates. The state agencies that will be participating in the Cross Agency Data System are listed in a chart. Two Head Start/Early Head Start grantees have agreed to serve as a pilot for this data exchange and their letters of support can be found in Appendix 22. The state is encouraging all licensed child care and registered family day care homes to enter a child on a roster and attendance for the purpose of collecting data. The same process will be used to have other agencies provide data the will be in the system for tracking. The state will expand the collection of Essential Data Elements that allow other services to use the online services to expedite time in providing quality services in the field. The use of this system will move the availability of information that can be displayed to parents as well as improve data accuracy faster. Also updated information will be shared online with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to reduce the burden of duplication of data collected and increase the efforts of efficiency. The Professional Development System and the Professional Development Registry and the Trainer/Training Approval are systems establish currently with the state. These systems have been detailed in Section D of this grant. The state plan for data systems has been outlined in the last three criteria of the grant. The state is creating and establishing services for the agencies and networks to ensure that data will be utilized and are effective for all programs especially, data that will impact our children with high needs as well as preschool children. The use of assigned agencies to oversee the operations of the data systems, along with a point check personnel (data owner and data steward) guarantees that the systems will be monitored for the designed use. The use of tables that outlined the projects, agencies, goals as well as the rationale have provided a clear picture of what the grant road map of achieving these goals for our Children with High Needs has been informative. Georgia has created many agencies that will provide vital data to providers, teachers, parents, communities, and the children. The more feedback that programs have on the results from studies and assessment provides for improvements. Partially implemented and high quality responses.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	231

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Competitive Preference Priority 2 The state of Georgia has developed programs and services that will monitor the licensing of providers through many agencies, community based organizations and federal programs. The state provided a list of systems that are not regulated by the state to oversee programs for licensing and regulations. The state developed a data system that will incorporate information from the child care providers and other preschool providers using the TQRIS. The TQRIS has standards that align with the state's early learning and development standards. This data system will provide links regarding program status on obtain licensing, credential and assessment data. The state has requirements that have been mandated regarding licensing as well as who can participate in some of the projects such as the TQRIS and the incentive programs. The state provides charts and tables that depict the rationale for the projects and their sustainability after the grant ends. The provided mandates will address certain requirements for programs and providers to adhere to. The state focus on the licensing of providers and other non regulated centers meets requirements set by the federal, local, or state levels. The state has met this priority with the activities, projects, and goals outlined and the establishing of a assessments system that will provide feedback for improvements to the grant's programs and services . The TQRIS expanded opportunities for the Tittel and Head Start programs to participate in the 1-5 level system.

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>Absolute Priority The state of Georgia has met all the requirements for the absolute priority. The state has demonstrated how it will accomplish providing high quality services to children with high needs. The goals that are established and the strategies to implement the various projects are targeted at providing increased services to the families, communities and children of Georgia. The state has designed positive and effective services and programs that will continue after the grant. The services Georgia has outlined will be supported by their large number of stakeholders, agencies and programs. The many activities and projects that are geared toward assisting teachers, parents, and the community as a whole will make a meaningful impact. The state's reflections on the needs of the families and children from all areas including the rural to the urban indicated that they</p>	

understand the value of providing best services to have better communities and families in Georgia. The input from teachers, stakeholders, and parents in planning for the best services and the agencies that would benefit the children in their communities was a great insight as well as understanding the valuable input these groups bring to the grant. The letters of support were outstanding in numbers, and through the commitment of the many agencies and programs will make a difference in achieving the ambitious goals. The state indicate the challenges that they face in some of the agencies and program services, but being aware of the concerns and problems will assist in making the necessary changes.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # GA-5009

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:25 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

In general, the applicant has provided high quality response and is well positioned to implement the RTT-ELC, with a significant history of financial commitment, legislation, policies and practice. Each of the building blocks is in place and will be refined to improve outcomes for children birth through five years of age, particularly for Children with High Needs. Given the current economic climate nationwide, Georgia's financial commitment to Early Childhood Education (birth to five) and its substantial 9.2% increase (even greater 14.7% for pre-K population) over the past four years provides strong evidence of a financial commitment in a difficult economy where funding for the birth to five populations competes with other significant priorities in states. The establishment of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) speaks to important legislation mandating oversight of all Early Childhood Learning. Either through direct oversight and regulation or through strong collaborative agreements, Georgia has established sound and effective policies and practices that support services for children birth-five in the state, including Children with High Needs. The applicant provides strong evidence for the existing policies and practices and state-funded preschool that resulted from the 1990 political campaign for governor. This nearly 20 year history of universal Pre-K demonstrates strong commitment and continuous improvement of their system, meeting national standards and establishing strong collaboration among agencies involved in early childhood services. The Georgia Study of Early Care and Education, University of North Carolina. FPG Child Development Institute (formerly the Frank Porter Graham Center) provided in Appendices 7, 8, and 9, provides a clear, strong, evidence-based direction for moving forward with the current RTT-ELC project in that it identifies important areas of concern in the current program types serving the birth to five population. The data from these studies will be extremely important for both aligning standards across different types of programs and improving those programs through the comprehensive TQRIS process. A major emphasis on special populations of Children with High Needs is almost exclusively being translated to services for children with low income. The applicant has provided data, 54% of the population of birth to five children are living in poverty, and therefore considerable emphasis is expected on this population in the service system; however the remaining special populations, specifically children with disabilities, who may need a greater intensity of services, more highly trained and educated service providers, specialized equipment and strategies for learning, and incur

increased costs, do not appear to be fully addressed in the current system. Discussions in this section and in the appendices regarding disabilities and inclusion are somewhat limited compared to other populations. The applicant provides a discussion regarding difficulty in reporting total numbers of children who are enrolled in Early Education Programs in the state, because the children may be enrolled or receiving more than one service, this is understandable. It does, however, remain difficult to determine how the number of children with high needs (other than poverty) relates to the actual number of children birth to five. Of some concern are the numbers and services currently reported for children with disabilities. For this special population, the figures appear to be low compared to the total population of children birth to five in the state. The figure of children with disabilities are determined by the number of children with Individual Family Service Plan (IFSPs) or Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs), children who are already identified. Based on the total population of children from birth to five years of age, the number with disabilities appears to be low. This is particularly true of infants and toddlers (birth to two population, although the applicant does state that the Part C numbers are increasing. One might also conclude that Part B numbers are decreasing because these children are being successfully included in the Pre-K system and not a preschool special education class. In a state with 825,000 children birth to five - it would be expected that at a minimum 2-6% would have identified disabilities and developmental delays. Conservatively this would indicate that at least 2% @ 16,500 children would have disabilities. The numbers reported do not approach that generally accepted percentage.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant presents a holistic approach to goals that match the criteria for the RTT-ELC projects. The reform agenda addresses governance at the state level, using significant collaborative efforts, with letters of support documenting the collaboration and coordination of all the state agencies involved in serving the population. Governance that builds on long-standing relationships, as well as newly identified key partners, is clearly described and the application provides comprehensive information regarding the members (membership), DECAL, the Advisory Council. Subcommittees and Action Teams will provide a system of checks and balances, and strong oversight from the governor's office is an important feature for making the plan work. At the committee and action team level the goals, strategies, activities, roles and responsibility are clearly defined and will result in effective implementation of each of the 11 projects that have been identified to structure the reform agenda. The plan is achievable in that the problems, gaps in services, inconsistencies across standards and programs, and barriers to establishing a High Quality State Plan at each level (governance at the state level to programmatic at the local level) have been identified, analyzed, and problem-solved, with suggested solutions and recommendations. Past investment, once again, provided by the FPG Center studies, identifies issues across the three program types (Early Education Centers, Pre-K, and Family Day Care) and is critically important in the building of standards and training and support of providers. The TQRIS system will ensure that change occurs and offers incentives and supports that are motivating as well as practical, and will help providers make changes that reflect relevant research and evidence-based practices. The system will result in improved outcomes for children and help close the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers by identifying key differences in programs (content, quality, and Early Childhood Educators knowledge, experience and skills) and implementing a plan to bring all into alignment. As in the previous section, the focus remains on children with high needs living in poverty as one of the special groups of this population, and does not strongly address the needs of children with disabilities. Based on the current status of the state system, the available resources, and the comprehensive groundwork that has been laid, the applicant's choice of competitive priorities is sound. The elements in place are strong and the goals to refine and align the variety of standards and systems is ambitious. Evidence provided through past history documents that the plan is doable for this state and the individual project plans reflect the criteria in a thorough manner. In considering the applicant's choice not to address health and developmental outcomes, one special population, again children with disabilities, has health and developmental needs that go beyond what is included in the standards and assessments planned, even with discussion of inclusion of children with disabilities. Addressing these health and developmental needs will have an impact on the workforce, as well as on program components of the plan. The applicant does state that the health and developmental outcomes are addressed through the Early Learning Standards and therefore not addressed as a separate priority.

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

10

10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant provides evidence that they have established and substantially implemented strong participation in and commitment to the plan. Furthermore, the components of a high quality plan are evident in the application throughout the narrative, tables, MOUs, and letters of support. They have fully addressed the criteria with a thoughtful, creative, and accountable structure for governance that will support effective decision-making (clear roles and responsibilities, accountability, and broad-based stakeholder buy-in and ownership of the project). This strong commitment was evidenced by the MOUs from all departments and agencies who have responsibility, financial commitment, and/or oversight of the system. MOUs contained appropriate signatures. The letters of support from public and private entities, legislators, early childhood associations, parents councils, and other stakeholders identified in the criteria were represented. A clear, organizational chart illustrating the governance structure, responsibilities, and relationships was provided and supported the narrative; as well as a table listing all stakeholders and submission of letters of support. Many of the letters of support commented on the state's long-time commitment to early childhood learning and the fact that Georgia is one of three states with a state level department created to support early education for children birth to five years of age and the establishment of universal Pre-K for all four year old children in the state.

Available

Score

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

15

14

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant provides a high quality response with comprehensive information that addresses the criteria for a High Quality Plan. The applicant provides two tables along with a clear narrative describing and demonstrating how 26 different funding streams are currently being effectively leveraged – or – “braided together” –to provide services for the population, including several funding streams targeted for Children with high Needs. “Braided together” is a useful descriptor in that, examining the activities and services and their alignment with the outcomes in the state plan, one can clearly understand where there is overlap, because of the child’s needs and enrollment in multiple services, and how this overlap will be considered and used to the advantage of the child. Federal, State, local, and private funding is identified demonstrating substantial stakeholder buy-in and financial support for the initiative. The second table provides information regarding the existing funding streams that will be used (based on FY 2012 through 2015) to achieve project outcomes, and how the agency, organization, or other entity that is the source of the income will participate each of the eleven projects described to implement the plan. The funding described in the section is reasonable, appropriate, and sufficient for the activities and outcomes described in the plan. Of some concern, and not addressed in the narrative is the funding stream from IDEA, Part C (infants and toddlers with disabilities). There appears to be a disconnect between the plan and this population at this point in the application, however this population was addressed in the training of TA Consultants and the Mentoring Program, later in the application. Sustainability is discussed in relation to each of the eleven projects. There is a distinction provided and evidence of sustainability for functions that are necessary for the Early Childhood Learning and Development System and the RTT-ELC project implementation. For example, regarding governance, the applicant recognizes the importance of DECAL and the Advisory Council to the System and state and federal funding will continue to support the continuing work of DECAL and the State Advisory Council and its Subcommittees. The action teams, designed to specifically implement components of the RTT-ELC project, will no longer be necessary at the end of the project.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	9

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

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

(1) Early Learning and Development Standards;

(2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;

(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;

(4) Family engagement strategies;

(5) Health promotion practices; and

(6) Effective data practices;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The applicant describes a TQRIS System that is based on a well-defined quality improvement system currently operating in the State. The revised TQRIS is comprehensive and individual segments have a status of substantially implemented with revisions proposed to the existing system as the plan is implemented and the other projects are revised. The quality of the response is high. This substantial implementation combined with the high quality response provided in this section, is the basis for the rubric used for scoring. The new TQRIS is based on program standards that include The Early Learning Standards (revised July 2011 and ready to launch in January 2012). In the revision of the Standards, the applicant's attention to intentional teaching practices reflect the important findings of the FPG Center study that identified inconsistency and/or decreased emphasis on intentional teaching practices across program types. This revision will clearly impact on the TQRIS system plan in evaluation and improving programs, training personnel, and evaluating the readiness skills of all children in the population, particularly Children with High Needs. Regarding the Comprehensive Assessment System, Georgia currently has a system in place for the Pre-K programs, however evidence was not presented that it is in place for other program types and populations. In the Plan, the Assessment System will be expanded to include an assessment instrument that is appropriate for younger children and Children with High Needs (the ASK and the ASK-SE). The applicant provides evidence that each assessment instrument identified has validity and reliability and a structure is in place to continue to validate instruments and procedures that will be used to enhance and expand the system. The quality of the Comprehensive Assessment Plan is high in that the applicant addresses training, gradual "roll out" or implementation, appropriate and adequate timelines, with emphasis on programs serving Children with High Needs. The qualifications of early childhood educators are based on standards for a center-based workforce and are verified by the GA Professional Directory and by the GA Professional Standards Commission. Outside verification, tracking, and a monitoring system and the future ability to link to licensing and technical assistance and training are effective in determining the TQRIS quality ratings. Family engagement strategies are logical, sequential, and based on a sound self assessment (Strengthening Families Assessment Tool) that will assist the programs to identify strengths and challenges regarding the quality and effectiveness of family engagement. Quality ratings of this component are linked to high quality staff and program ratings that are linked to effective family engagement strategies. One concern, regarding family engagement strategies is the criteria for very good and excellent ratings on cultural and linguistic appropriateness, is 4 to 6 hours for training per year in cultural competencies, this seems inadequate for skill development. Four to six hours of training will typically result in awareness level and some basic skills; best practice would require more in-depth training and follow-up for an excellent rating (competency) on the TQRIS. This will be addressed in the revisions, as described in later sections.

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

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

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

(1) State-funded preschool programs;

(2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;

(3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;

(4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Several components of the plan are partially implemented and the applicant has established a high quality plan to promote participation in TQRIS through a variety of effective policies and practices. The eligibility requirements make it possible for all programs licensed by DECAL or publicly funded to volunteer to participate. The information provided in the previous section regarding a plan to bring programs into compliance for licensing also will promote participation from programs formerly not able to participate. For programs receiving CCDF funds, the policy for receiving the subsidy bonus based on the number of children with High Needs receiving high quality services (rated through the TQRIS system) also promotes participation. Also for programs funded by CCDF, linkages between TQRIS levels and higher subsidy bonuses will encourage programs to serve Children with High Needs and participation in the TQRIS system. Program incentives are linked through the TQRIS system to improved professional development via reduced training costs, individual bonuses to administrators and teachers in programs in the highest tier (Excellent TQRIS rating). Bonus packages to programs will lead to participation in the TQRIS system and associated training, and ultimately improvement and maintaining high quality programs that will have a significant impact on all children, and particularly, Children with High Needs through the bonus package for purchase of materials and equipment. Baseline data for early learning and development programs participation is established and the targets represent achievable goals based on the information provided and, with the previously described important incentives, bonus, and subsidies available for participation, the goals are realistic. The goals are also realistic in that they reflect the funds available to provide the incentives.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The applicant has identified several valid and reliable tools for rating and monitoring the TQRIS System, well-respected Environmental Rating Scales, developed for specific age-groups and populations and a Portfolio Assessment. These tools have a high inter-rater reliability, all Georgia assessors have achieved inter-rater reliability at 85% or higher. To strengthen inter-rater reliability adding second tier of ratings through an anchor with a rating of 90% inter-reliability will accompany other assessors every 20 visits. Environmental ratings are done every three years leading to an adequate frequency of ratings. Georgia rates a sampling of classrooms in a program and also assures that classrooms are rated for each age-group served. The TQRIS Portfolio allows programs to submit evidence of compliance across each of the Program Standards, including Intentional Teaching Practices which was identified as an area of concern in the FPG Institute study. Portfolio assessors demonstrate 90% inter-rater reliability. The TQRIS System appears to be substantially implemented (QRIS) with revisions, training, and updates of rating scales added to the implementation of the System as these projects are completed. The second criterion in this section, providing information to parents about TQRIS, is planned for implementation in January 2013, therefore indicating an overall rating of partially implemented for the section as a whole. The applicant proposes a High Quality Plan for implementing this activity. All TQRIS ratings will be posted on the DECAL websites, including postings regarding licensing, health and safety ratings, teacher certifications, etc. In order to make parents aware of the availability of this information, a public awareness campaign regarding indicators of quality in selecting programs for children birth to five will be implemented. The information will be available in Spanish and English, the two predominant languages identified in the state, with other language options planned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicant has established several components that will lead to improving the quality of programs participating in the TQRIS System, and built its response around the three critical components identified that support continuous improvement; technical assistance, professional development, and mentoring. Each of these is discussed in terms of current status, implementation, and plans for improvement. The TA System that is currently in place is based on sound research and principles of adult learning. In 2012, TQRIS will work with 60-75 consultants who will be trained through a series of professional preparation courses and earn certification as TA Consultants. Professional development courses have been developed to address components of the TQRIS System and early childhood program directors will be required to attend these courses beginning in 2012. A telephone Help Desk is also available. The mentoring program is built on an existing mentoring model. Based on the FPG study findings that two-thirds of the infant toddler classrooms are rated low quality, this group is targeted for the mentoring program. The State Infant/Toddler Network will establish the mentoring program for family child care teachers and center-based teachers serving infants and toddlers with high needs. This model will be expanded in 2013 to include mentoring for teachers of preschool and school-age Children with High Needs. In the future, the State Mentoring Program will result in advancing quality throughout the TQRIS System. Regarding children with disabilities, TA consultants trained in supporting children with disabilities will provide specialized technical assistance and programs will receive financial support for materials and equipment. Information about the programs with specialized training and support for children with disabilities will be disseminated through listing on the state website and signs designating expertise in working with children with disabilities will be placed in the program facilities. The TQRIS financial incentives are a practice that will improve participation and assist programs to reach high quality ratings. The TQRIS System will enter into local partnerships and generate community investment in the project through distributing the incentive packages to programs through the Family Connection Partnerships --local consortia. The range of financial incentives will improve the quality of the workforce and encourage programs to serve greater numbers of Children with High Needs -- as attaining status of very good and excellent will allow programs to serve this population. In turn, serving this population will generate additional funds. The application states that historically, there have not been adequate resources to provide support to working families of children with high needs, and particularly children with disabilities. Families are often placed on waiting lists for receiving subsidies, they are challenged with navigating a fragmented system, and programs are reluctant to accept these families, as subsidies are lower than the market rate for services. Therefore, linking services for Children with High Needs to higher rating in the TQRIS will increase the numbers of children served, as well as professionally and financially support programs. Through RTT-ELC the TQRIS System will be revised, expanded, trainers will be trained, and incentives will be available to programs -- this high quality plan will address the challenges identified that have historically been barriers to supporting families of Children with High Needs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The applicant has based the validation methods for the TQRIS on a "history of reflective practice based on ambitious research", however these research-based methods are not described in this section, beyond stating the research questions and describing the sample to be evaluated. The applicant does, however address the important questions regarding the relationship between TQRIS program ratings and overall child outcomes, and are certain components of the rating system predictive of child outcomes (better than other components). The TQRIS System will be validated using a random sample of 200 child care early education programs and family day care homes. The sample will include programs who have volunteered to participate and vigorous recruitment strategies will be used to identify and examine programs who have not volunteered to participate in the TQRIS System. The research questions presented by the applicant fully address the criteria (and reflect the important components of a High Quality Plan) examining the relationship between project activities under the TQRIS system and program improvement, including whether program ratings affect parent decision-making. The study will also examine Georgia's school-based Pre-K separately, using qualitative and quantitative methods, recognizing that school-based Pre-K programs must also be responsive to state and local policies and procedures outside of the scope of the TQRIS System – but also must coordinate and comply with the System Standards. The timeline for the activities are broad, stated in years, and the parties responsible for implementation (independent and internal research capabilities, including Governor's Office of Student Achievement) need more specificity – i.e., the independent and internal researchers). The scheduling does reflect other projects, including rolling out the Comprehensive Assessments System and addressing enrollment of Children with High Needs. The first two years provide adequate time for the initial part of the study to answer questions regarding the relationship between TQRIS System and the quality of programs. The second phase (years 3 and 4) will validate the TQRIS System in relation to child outcomes and school readiness. The applicant has stated, and provided strong evidence to document the reflective process that has been consistently used in the State, of refining systems, procedures, policies, and activities based on evaluative findings. In this way, the validity study will be used to refine the TQRIS System. The research questions examine child readiness in relation to the program's TQRIS tier and will be an effective strategy for predicting how TQRIS ratings will affect child outcomes. Finally, the evaluation design will identify what most influenced movement between rating levels – this will be valuable information in terms of overall improvement of program quality and what worked best for improving outcomes for children. Based on the absence of a complete discussion of the research-based measures and the concerns cited regarding some of the timelines (above), the medium-high quality rubric was used in evaluation this section.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The state standards for early learning and development have been in place for several years and have recently been re-examined to determine developmental appropriateness, cultural and linguistic appropriateness, appropriateness across age groups, and school readiness. Although standards have been in place, the analysis revealed areas of misalignment with Georgia Early Learning Standards (GELS), Pre-K content standards, Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) K-3, Head Start Standards, and the Work Sampling System, used for formative assessment in programs. The development of new comprehensive standards addresses identified areas of weakness in the prior standards. The new standards are almost ready for implementation, and will be available in February 2012. These standards have been aligned with the K-3 academic standards not only for early literacy and math but they also cover all other academic and non-academic areas. The new standards are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant provides evidence that the GELS are incorporated into professional development activities and will use strategies that have been shown to be effective in training for the new standards. The strategies employ a range of delivery methods, designed to reach a diverse audience using distance, and online learning, self-study, and a train-the-trainer model which also ensures sustainability of the efforts. The strategies include: • Live streaming – to an already an extensive audience. In September 2011, 23,000 reported visitors participated in the first live streaming opportunity • CD and video production • Online training • Train-the-Trainer Model The plan for implementation is of high quality and comprehensive in terms of how the standards will be integrated, particularly around professional development activities. The State will also use a marketing firm to package the information in a way that will reach a wide audience promoting understanding and commitment to the new Standards.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

In this Focused Investment Area, the activities and strategies are partially implemented. Certain components that are in place will serve as a model or basis for implementing the components that are planned and/or partially implemented. There is wide variability between assessments in the Pre-K system and programs serving the birth to three population. The quality of the plan to support effective implementation of Comprehensive Assessment Systems is consistently high. In selecting assessment instruments and approaches that will be appropriate for the target audience the applicant will build out the Pre-K Assessment already in place and modify and replicate this tool for the birth to three populations, including more partners (Maternal Child Health, Early Head Start) who will provide input relevant to the birth to three population in developing the new tool. Formative assessment currently used in Pre-K – based on the Work Sampling System –which has curriculum embedded and is criterion referenced, is a performance assessment that provides information about the range of students' abilities and the students' overall development. This information is used to learn about the students and plan programs. In early intervention, a wide range of assessments are used and these guide IFSP development. The Plan addresses the need for better alignment of early intervention assessments with the other assessments as well as with Program Standards. Environmental measures are not used in most of the Early Learning and Development Programs. The Environmental Rating Scales that are administered are used to plan professional development, but are not administered regularly. The RTT-ELC project will provide training as part of the TQRIS System to train Early Learning Educators to use these scales for program improvement. Adult-Child Interaction Measures are also not routinely used in Early Learning and Development Programs. In 2010-11, the CLASS instruments were used in Pre-K programs to establish a baseline for future comparisons. DECAL is developing a professional development model designed to improve the quality of teacher-child interaction using the CLASS instruments. Implementation of a Comprehensive Assessment System is generally in the planning phase. In order to align assessments and train Early Childhood Educators in selecting and using assessments, several key projects are planned. A cross-agency action team (with broad representation of agencies and programs, including representatives of those focused on serving Children with High Needs) will be formed to work on assessment. Professional development opportunities tailored to specific needs of different types of programs will be developed. Professional development opportunities will be developed through the GA Public Broadcasting System with live streaming in

English and Spanish. This plan addressed the significant needs and weaknesses that were identified in the study of Georgia early childhood education (FPG Institute) as well as the application criteria. The proposed plan will result in more effective identification of Children with High Needs through more comprehensive screening and assessment, as well as planning appropriate programs that address school readiness.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)
<p>The applicant has described a progression of Parent Involvement Standards that are in place and address the majority of the evidence required, with the exception of specific outreach to fathers and intergenerational activities. With the RTT-ELC project, the applicant will design a new framework aligning the Parent Involvement Standards with the newly established Head Start Standards (for family involvement), resulting in a comprehensive plan for implementation during the grant period. Many of the Standards currently in place are culturally and linguistically appropriate and the applicant plans, with RTT-ELC funds, to address this requirement more fully through alignment with the recently published Head Start Standards. Presently, training in cultural and linguistic competence is minimal, even at the excellent level (6 hrs of training) which would result in awareness, but not competence in the critical area. The applicant's targets for increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators trained are provided in percentages (numbers not provided as stated in criteria). The TQRIS Standard 4 – Family Partnerships – will be revised and enhanced under the RTT-ELC project. A strength of the proposal is the leveraging of the existing work of the Early Childhood Systems of Care Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) grant that serves children in family, friend, and neighbor care, as well as other community based projects. The grant will establish a support team, in the community to offer support and guidance to families. The project will solicit proposals for all community to participate, awarding grants to those communities that demonstrate a strong capacity by involvement with one of the existing initiatives (an Early Childhood Systems of Care initiative, a Georgia Family connection Collaborative plan with an Early Childhood Focus, or have an existing 360 Degrees of Family Engagement plan). The activities and strategies for parent involvement are partially implemented and the response is medium quality given the absence of projected numbers of ECE trained and the somewhat limited training efforts outlined in the plan for cultural and linguistic appropriateness.</p>

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant presents a substantial history of addressing workforce competencies and aligning them with the Early Learning Standards. Within the High Quality Plan these competencies will be revised and expanded to align with the revised Early Learning and Development Standards, as planned in the project. The proposed plan will integrate and provide more cohesion between Early Learning and Development Standards, credentials, and training of Early Childhood Educators. This will improve outcomes for children through better trained and credentialed Early Childhood Educators. Based on the evidence provided by the applicant, the level of education, experience, and training of Early Childhood Educators (who are not working in Pre-K programs) is very basic, some with minimal requirements of high school diploma and/or GED. Of some concern, regarding credentials is that formal early childhood education coursework or training is not required until level V in the career levels. However, these concerns are mitigated by the current status of the workforce. The planned study and research questions will provide valuable information regarding the relationship between credentials, age-group served, and program setting. This information can direct improvement in training, credentialing, and professional development of the workforce. The State Higher Education System has aligned coursework and credentials with competencies. The creation of a specific degree program and certification in early childhood provides evidence of the significant investment and commitment to the birth to three population. The scoring rubric for this section was partially implemented with a high quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

As in many of the other sections, the implementation of this focus area is in varying stages, from substantial implementation to those activities that are in the planning stages therefore a determination of partially implemented has been made. A high quality plan is in evidence to address the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators and, overall, the strategies and activities are partially implemented. In response to this Focus Area, the applicant has first identified the importance of well-educated and experienced training personnel and this is substantially implemented through the Georgia Trainer Approval System. This system is responsible for scrutinizing training qualifications of the trainers. A second system, The GA Training Approval System, compliments the trainer system and determines the appropriateness and quality of the training courses and ensures that they are congruent with the GA Early Learning and Care Education Professional Development Competencies. Through RTT-ELC project activities, these two systems will be linked so that training opportunities are matched to training needs and can be tracked in congruence with each other. The four training designations for trainers matches the trainers to the experience, skill level, and training needs of the educators. The trainers include training entities as well as individual trainers (GA department and agencies providing training in particular areas of expertise, e.g. Division of Family and Children Services provides training in child abuse and prevention training). Access is assured through a wide range of strategies already in place, including, an Online Learning Library, on-line courses offered by colleges and university including the Technical Certificate of Credit through the Tech College System, community based training, and an on-line training calendar. The applicant provides documentation of the effectiveness making training available through on-line learning, particularly for educators in rural areas. A new effort under the RTT-ELC project is the establishment of Communities of Practice, an informal peer training and TA system lead by trained facilitators at the community level. The applicant provides evidence of significant scholarships and incentives in the state that not only provide financial support for professionals but encourage advancement to higher level degrees and certifications. The improvement and combining of the two

training systems in the State to form GA TRAINS will support the state in gathering and reporting data regarding professional development, advancement, and teacher retention. The targets identified address the maintenance of the current entities aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. e.g. 100% of tech colleges is the baseline information and 100% of the tech colleges in the 2015 goal. Increasing the number of educators addresses both the increase in higher credentials and a significant decrease in those who are non-credentialed. In the targets for Technical College degrees up to the Ph.D, there is not a significant change in numbers after years 2012 and 2013. An explanation of this was not documented in the narrative.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The applicant has presented a high quality plan for a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is currently not being implemented in the State, however, several key activities that will contribute to the successful implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment are in place. Because the Assessment is not currently being implemented, the rubric for minimally or not implemented along with a high quality response is being applied. The State will pilot the assessment in 2012, this pilot will inform gradual implementation and be administered to children entering Kindergarten in August 2014 – meeting the criteria for timelines for implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The Plan addresses the training of teachers in administering the assessment. Assurances are provided that the assessment will not be used to deny kindergarten entry to any child. A concern relative to the assessment is in relation to its appropriateness for children with disabilities and other Children with High Needs, Although nationally respected experts will evaluate the instrument to ensure appropriateness, evidence is not presented relative to adaptations or modifications to ensure that the assessment is appropriate for children with disabilities (i.e., accommodations, modifications, translators, etc) although this may be implied in the work of the outside evaluations. This evidence would strengthen this section. The Assessment's validity and reliability will be ensured by the GaDOE Advisory Committee and national experts in relation to Standards and educational measures. Funding for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment is covered by the GaDOE and DECAL budget, meeting the criteria and ensuring sustainability

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The project will substantially integrate various data collection systems and will support easy access and use of the data collected by various constituency groups. The applicant provides a summary of the Essential Data Elements and how the State is currently meeting these elements. Most of the Essential Data Elements are in place for Georgia's Pre-K students. The applicant provides evidence that the Essential Data Elements will be extended across the range of ELDPs in the state through the implementation of the project. Unique identifiers for Georgia's Pre-K students, including students in private provider settings, are currently linked to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System early childhood teachers and program sites are in place. These identifiers will facilitate linkage to other data systems. Infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Part C and Part B- 619, are assigned unique Georgia Testing Identifiers. The applicant plans to build out and implement the Cross Agency Child Data System within this project to facilitate the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies. The applicant provides evidence that additional populations will be linked through the Cross Agency Child Data System, beginning with Children with High Needs: Head Start, Early Head Start, and children receiving child care subsidies, these groups also represent a significant number of children, birth to five in the state. The design work for the Cross Agency System will be completed in December 2011. The applicant provides evidence that the data system will comply with the Federal, State, and local privacy laws and responsibility for data governance will be placed with a Data Governance Council to develop appropriate policy and ensure compliance with FERPA and HIPSS laws. The applicant has components of the data system in place and overall it is partially implemented. A high quality response was provided to address the criteria.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	229

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	6

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Georgia has in place a licensing system – the Child Care Services Division of DECAL that – provides comprehensive oversight, monitoring and regulation of child care centers. One caveat is in regard to family day care, in which the applicant defines family day care as three or more children, unrelated to the caregiver, and the regulations define this as two or more children. The facilities are monitored using a focused visit based on 12 core licensing areas. Compliance is based on the number and severity of core rule category violations. These rules examine health and safety of children. Visits occur with enough frequency to be reliable in evaluating the health and safety of programs (2x yr). The TQRIS system is comprehensive, and all licensed programs can volunteer to participate, and for those not licensed there is a licensing prep course that prepares programs for licensing evaluation. The TQRIS policy is clear and sets an important baseline for requirements and/or compliance with licensing rules, Georgia's Pre-K programs, relevant food programs, and registration of staff in the Professional Development Registry. A concern is the voluntary participation and this, in fact, will not ensure participation and identified in the criteria. There are substantial incentives and bonus, described in previous sections that will impact on increased participation. A focus is the recruitment of programs that serve Children with High Needs and these programs will be supported through the rating process through technical assistance as well as through financial incentives. All Pre-K programs are expected to be participating (90%by the end of the project). Targets for gradual building of participation are realistic and progress in increments from 10% in year one to 50% by the end of the project. A reasonable percentage (50%) of family child care provides will also be expected to be participating by the end of the project. This section was scored as partially implemented with a medium quality response.

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The plan presented in this application is clear, comprehensive, and builds on an impressive history and substantial funding of initiatives in early childhood education. It addresses the requirements of the absolute priority. There is exceptional interagency collaboration, recognizing the many agencies and entities that must interact successfully to implement a high quality system for young children, particularly Children with High Needs. The plan sets forth a clear direction and paradigm for how these entities will operate, make-decisions, and accomplish the tasks of the project, using the strengths, expertise, and responsibilities of the systems aligned to a specific component of the Early Learning and Development System. Of particular strength is the establishment in this state of a separate department, that is not a part of education, health, or human services and reports directly to the governor's office. In establishing this agency, DECAL, the focus can clearly remain on the children, birth to</p>	

five. Strong leadership at the state level, is filtered to regional and community support of parents and professionals for developing and maintaining leadership in improving early childhood programs in communities. In Georgia, Children with High Needs living in poverty, make up 54% of the target population. It cannot be disputed that poverty is one of the single-most predictive factors in school failure. Poverty is systemic in low academic achievement, and must be addressed at many levels to improve school readiness and further school success. Poverty or lack of resources is not only addressed in the target population of children, but also addressed in providing incentives and scholarships to a professional population that is traditionally low-paid and, as documented in the application, has minimal education and training. Incentives and bonus packages will also be provided to programs to increase their resources and improve program quality. The standards for both early learning and for professional competence reflect best practice and the important research and analysis that has been done in the state over the past two decades. These standards have been integrated exceedingly well with the TQRIS System and with the comprehensive assessment and professional development systems. It is important to see how the overlap between systems has been addressed through collaboration, coordination, and alignment with each other to focus on the key readiness skills for Kindergarten entry. The quality of programs, information, and professional development initiatives will be disseminated to the professional populations, families, and other throughout the state. In the dissemination strategies, the applicant has included approaches that will be critical to reaching a wide range of audiences, particularly families living in poverty. Strong data was presented to support the approach of using public broadcasting, web casts, and radio to get information to this population, as well as, to let families know that this information is available for finding and choosing high quality education programs for their children. The improvements of each system described take this already established and successful State system of services to a level that ensures accountability and most critically, successful outcomes for children.