



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IA-5012

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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	13
<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)

State data tables are not completed fully making it difficult to interpret the information that is provided in the narrative. For example, Table (A)(1)-1 does not contain data on the number of children from low-income families by age including infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In addition, Table (A)(1)-5 has NA in the cell for number of Children with High Needs in state-funded preschool and IDEA Part C and Part B, 619 programs in 2011. The State makes a claim that the number of children served is increasing but Table (A)(1)-5 shows a decrease in children participating from 2010 to 2011 in programs listed and without the number of children in state-funded preschool and IDEA Part C and Part B, 619 programs it is difficult to validate how the State has identified an increase. Table (A)(1)-4, Historical Contributions, shows a small decline in state contributions to CCDF and TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs as might be expected in the recent economic climate. However, spending on state-funded preschool is estimated to rise by 148% or \$23.3M. This may indicate the State expects a corresponding increase in enrollment or is extending the amount of time children are served each day. Without Table (A)(1)-5 completed to provide a number of children currently enrolled in the state-funded preschool program, it is difficult to understand the considerable increase in state-funded preschool funding. The state has provided evidence of legislative support for Early Learning and Development Programs in a number of diverse areas showing an understanding of the comprehensive nature of early learning. The following examples serve as evidence: -Funding has increased for the States Children's Health Insurance Program -Childcare regulations have increased and include background checks and an increase in the frequency of inspections. -Funding is provided for early childhood professional development -All children are required to have a dental screening before entering kindergarten. Some building blocks are in place to support reform in early learning and development but significant work is still needed. The State has Early Learning and Development Standards in place but these Standards are not tied to the TQRIS in a significant way. The State's Comprehensive Assessment System includes some of the required elements such as limited screening but other elements such as Formative Assessment and Environmental Quality are not present in a clear way. Family engagement strategies are addressed in a minimal fashion through the inclusion of data portals but no indication is given regarding how families of Children with High Needs will access the data portals. The development of Early Childhood Educators

and the Kindergarten Entry Assessment are both in the planning stages and little work has been done in these areas to establish them as building blocks for a high-quality system. Strengths for the State are the health promotion practices which are established and seem to be effective in the State and the effective data practices which are planned to integrate systems from various agencies.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	16

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 sets forth five goals. The goals relate directly to the reform areas required and include modifying and validating the TQRIS; building common child outcome measures; developing an integrated early care, health, and education professional development system; creating an integrated data system; and linking to K-12 reform efforts currently in place. Although these goals are articulated by the State, little emphasis is given to support the development of an integrated professional development system in the State and instead, professional development of Early Childhood Educators is consistently not addressed. The State pays special attention to the connection between the state's established K-12 reform agenda and the Early Learning and Development reform agenda to create a seamless system birth-12 grade. Both reforms will focus on Educator effectiveness, standards, and assessments aligned to standards. While the State seems to understand that ensuring children, especially Children with High Needs, are ready for kindergarten is critical to the success of the K-12 agenda plans for achieving this goal are not fully developed in throughout the narrative. Rationale is provided for the criteria the State has chosen to address in the Focused Investment Areas. For example, the State identifies the Comprehensive Assessment System as the weakest area of implementation in many Early Learning and Development Programs and therefore will address criterion (C)(2). The State also identifies (D)(1) as an area of need since it has not developed a credential progression for the workforce. Additionally, the State recognizes that without an integrated data system, it will not be possible to know the success of the reforms and therefore chooses to address (E)(2).

	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)(5)

The State has established the Department of Education as the Lead Agency with the Departments of Public Health, Human Services, and Management as participating Agencies. The Grant Management Team will consist of members from each of those Agencies as well as existing state Early Childhood staff. In addition to the Grant Management Team, a Leadership/Governance Team will be created which will consist of Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) directors as well as a representative from the Governors Office and the Department of Education Grant Coordinator. The Grant Management Team seems to be the oversight team while the Leadership Team seems to be the work group. Work of the Leadership Team will involve input from the ECI Boards as well as the ECI Stakeholder Alliance (the Early Childhood Advisory Council). These bodies are already in place in the state and are functioning in a similar capacity. Communication will be passed to the state and to local communities through the ECI Board and Stakeholder Alliance. These Boards consist of stakeholders at the community level and it is through these existing structures that grant activities will be planned and implemented. The State does not demonstrate that parents of Children with High Needs are members of these Boards nor are letters of support included showing how this population supports this grant effort. Although the State reports that the Leadership Team will make recommendations to various Boards to make changes to programs or policy when needed, little information is provided as to how policy and operational decisions will be made or how disputes will be resolved. Therefore, The State provides the appropriate documents including an MOU signed by the four participating State Agencies and a scope-of-work description from each Agency. Letters of support are included from stakeholder groups that will be involved in implementing grant activities including Early Childhood Iowa Advisory Council, Area Education Agency, Child Care Resource and Referral, Child Development Coordinating Council, the Family Child Care Association, Maternal and Child Health, and others. These letters are detailed and describe the way these organizations will be involved with the activities specified in the application. The number of letters of support seems small for the scope of activities. The State has provided few letters from agencies and organizations serving families of Children with High Needs and no letters from institutions of higher education. Since the State refers to these agencies in areas such as workforce development it is important that we see how these institutions will support the project yet that evidence is missing.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	8

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The State identifies several sources of existing funds that will be used in conjunction with other funds to support the Plan. 1) Early Childhood Advisory Council Grant - will help support the professional development framework, 2) ESEA Title VI - an unidentified amount will be used in conjunction with RTT-ELC funding to implement and sustain the Kindergarten Entry Assessment but the amount of the contribution is not specified, and 3) Early Childhood Comprehensive Services - assist with early care, health and education professional development system; assist with early childhood data systems. In addition, the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visitor program will provide leadership and support in the design and implementation of the credentialing system for family support staff. The utilization of these existing funds and systems increases the likelihood that reform activities will be sustained following the grant period. From the lack of details in the budget tables and budget narrative in this section and throughout the application, it is difficult to determine the reasonableness and appropriateness of the budget items and projects. As demonstrated by budget Table I-3, the majority of funds, \$16,913,580 will be used to implement the Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) program and to implement and upgrade the Early Childhood Data and Information System. The cost of the data information system seems reasonable for the work to be done; however, it is difficult to determine the reasonableness of funding the expansion of the CCNC project from the RTT-ELC funding since it is not a reform agenda since this project is already large and significantly implemented in the State. Of additional concern, the State reports that funding for local level CCNC is currently generated from various local sources and therefore creates inconsistency in delivery. It appears that local funds will be replaced with RTT-ELC grant funds which would have a negative impact on the sustainability of the project. When compared to other projects in the State, the CCNC will receive the largest allocation of financial resources at \$8,815,930. It is not clear how the State will continue to fund the CCNC efforts once the RTT-ELC funding period is over. In addition to concerns regarding the CCNC project, the State has provided limited information regarding the budget for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment which creates concerns. For example, it is not clear how much funding will be provided from ESEA and it is impossible to determine if RTT-ELC funds are sufficient to address the activities as outlined in the narrative.

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's Tiered Program Standards currently have several weaknesses. These weaknesses impact the State's ability to impact program quality and child outcomes. 1) Early Learning and Development Standards have been developed yet these Standards are not connected to the TQRIS as implementation of the Standards are not mentioned anywhere in the TQRIS menu. No Plan is in place to add implementation of the Standards to the State's TQRIS and therefore, there is no systematic motivation for programs to implement the Early Learning and Development Standards. 2) No Comprehensive Assessment System is in place and although the State has a plan to develop and implement a System the plan is not of high quality. For example, the Program Standards do not require measures of Environmental Quality except at Tier 5 and the State's High Quality Plan in this area includes adding the Environmental Rating Scale to Tier 4 but does not address Tier 3 or below. This instrument is currently used to measure adult-child interactions as well as environment and so no measure of environment or adult-child interaction occurs at the lower three tiers and programs receive no feedback to direct improvement efforts. 3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications are included in the Professional Development portion of the TQRIS. Programs only have to earn one point in this area for rating in the top tiers of the TQRIS which is a weakness. This issue is not addressed in the State's High Quality Plan. 4) Family engagement strategies are addressed in the Program Standards but only in a superficial way. There is little information in the narrative to describe how the family engagement criteria impact on a family's involvement in their child's program or in the family's understanding of their child's development. The State does have a plan to increase family access to information to inform decisions about program selection. 5) Health Promotion Practices are addressed in large part through work with the CCNC project. The TQRIS awards points for meeting with the Nurse Consultant, for developing plans, and for implementing plans. This implies that implementation of improvements in Health and Safety is voluntary yet when Health and Safety issues are identified, implementation of improvement strategies should not be voluntary. 6) Effective Data Practices are in place to some degree. The State has a High Quality Plan to integrate data systems to support and inform programs and others at the child, program, and state level. The State's TQRIS is based on national standards such as those from NAEYC, NAFCC, the National School Age Care Alliance, and others. However, the State has not had a method for evaluating the impact of the TQRIS on program quality due to the lack of a Comprehensive Assessment System and Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State does have a High Quality Plan to improve several aspects of the TQRIS but does not identify a plan of action if it is determined that the TQRIS does not impact program quality or child outcomes. The State links the TQRIS to the state licensing system by not allowing non-licensed programs to participate in the TQRIS. This currently excludes more than 4,300 providers serving five or fewer children since they are not required to be licensed. The State has a High Quality Plan to include these providers into the state licensing system and thus to include them in TQRIS eligibility.

	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)

This criteria addresses having all types of publicly funded programs participating in the TQRIS. The State refers to the availability of the QRS to all programs required including Head Start and Early Head Start. Table (B)(2)(c) provides baseline data for several program types and establishes that 19% of Head Start/Early Head Start programs participate in the TQRIS. The State fails to provide targets for increasing Head Start/Early Head Start participation in the TQRIS. The State has a High Quality Plan to maintain the supply of high-quality child care by expanding the Iowa Growth Fund to more rural providers and home care providers. While the plan has several strengths, it is not clear whether these efforts are targeted at areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs. The Growth Fund requires participation in the TQRIS and provides funds and business development to center-based and home-based providers. This model assists child care business in development of a business model and identification of multiple funding sources to reduce reliance on child care subsidy. This should have a

positive impact on the financial stability of these programs and thus maintain the supply of available programs. The State sets an ambitious yet achievable goal of increasing Growth Fund grants to center-based programs by 25 per year and home-based programs by 25 each year of the RTT-ELC grant. The Growth Fund graduates will serve as mentors to other programs thus increasing the likelihood of sustaining the program. The impact of the Growth Fund on areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs is in question. The State implies that programs serving Children with High Needs will be given priority for Growth Fund grants when it mentions a program that was, "...specifically selected because it served a high population of Hispanic children." The plan states that the provider's experiences will inform Growth Fund implementation as it targets other programs serving "diverse populations". This implies that the State is attempting to target programs serving higher numbers of Children with High Needs as recipients of the Growth Fund grants yet race and ethnicity are not identified in the definition of Children with High Needs and it cannot be assumed that children with racial and ethnic diversity are Children with High Needs. The State has a second High Quality Plan in this section to increase program participation in the TQRIS by increasing the TQRIS achievement bonus by 100% since providers have indicated that the current bonus is not enough to address the cost of quality improvements required by TQRIS. The State's plan includes increases to systems that support participation in the TQRIS including additional Child Care Consultants and expanded training opportunities including training in National Administrator Credential training, ChildNet, and Environmental Rating Scale. Increasing the achievement bonus and increasing support to programs will have a positive impact on the number of programs participating in the TQRIS. The State targets are more aggressive for programs that serve both Children with High Needs and other children than they are for programs that serve Children with High Needs exclusively. For example, the goal for Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs (SVPP) in the TQRIS is to increase from a baseline of 19% of programs to 50% of programs in 2015 and to increase participation by Licensed Centers and Preschools from 31% to 46%. Both of those programs serve Children with High Needs as well as children who are not High Needs so it is difficult to identify how much of an impact this will have on Children with High Needs. In comparison, targets for increasing participation by programs that are dedicated to serving Children with High Needs seem low. For example, the end-of-grant target for programs receiving CCDF funds is only 14.5% of programs, a small increase of 4.5% over the baseline, and targets for Head Start/Early Head Start are not set at all. These goals are not ambitious.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	6

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)

Monitoring of the TQRIS is not sufficient. TQRIS the State currently has very limited monitoring of programs participating in the and the proposed plan does not provide a sufficient increase to program monitoring. The TQRIS currently requires monitoring only for level 5 using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) while other levels of the TQRIS do not receive monitoring visits at all. The State plans to increase monitoring to levels 4 and 5 yet still has no plan in place to monitor level 3 which they seem to include in their consideration of top tiers of the system. Inclusion of only the ERS as a monitoring tool is a one-dimensional approach and does not provide sufficient information to rate programs. The State's next High Quality Plan addresses expanding family access to information Early Learning and Development Programs. The State currently provides information to families in the following ways: 1) Child Care Referral and Resource (CCR&R) provides information to families when they request a referral, 2) Providers are required to post their Tier or level of attainment on-site, and 3) Information is available on web-based portals such as DHS, KinderTrack, and Child Care Provider Training Registry. The State's plan is to expand information provided to families to include more details about which criteria the Early Learning and Development Program met and to make the information available on the KinderTrack and DHS data portals. This plan is achievable but is not ambitious since these data portals already seem to exist and only need some additional elements added to the system. The updates are not expected to be complete and available to parents until 2014 which is a slow implementation considering the limited amount of work needed.

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

Support is currently provided to programs through achievement bonuses for programs that participate in the TQRIS, earning TQRIS points for participating in training, and through technical assistance provided by various agencies. Some support for families, including working families who have Children with High Needs and qualify for Child Care Assistance, is in place and includes wrap around care for children in Head Start, Shared Visions, Title 1 preschool, and early childhood special education programs. According to Table (A)(1)-3 the State Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP) is a 10 hour a week program that serves 24,166 children. The SVPP is not mentioned in the programs that provide wrap-around care and it is not clear what support these children and their families receive. The State does not provide information about the number of children who access the support services which makes it difficult to determine implementation level. Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(2) provides baseline and target information on the number and percentage of children enrolled in programs at the top levels of TQRIS yet no data is provided for Head Start/Early Head Start or Title 1 program goals. Since these programs serve Children with High Needs, they should be involved and reported in the TQRIS. The State has a plan to increase the number of Children with High Needs who are served in programs that participate in the TQRIS. The plan involves concentrating efforts in geographic locations with higher concentrations of Children with High Needs but does not clarify what will be different or more focused in this area. The Plan includes 1) Providing information to families at the time of application to the Child Care Assistance program, 2) Review of the reimbursement rate structure for children with special needs, and 3) Consumer awareness campaign targeted to low-income families on the benefits of high quality care. More programs may join the TQRIS based on the increase in the achievement bonus but it is unclear how this Plan will increase the number of Children with High Needs in TQRIS programs based on the following: -The Plan does not include a review of the reimbursement rate for Children of High Needs other than children with special needs. Since these children are already granted a higher reimbursement, it is not clear what impact this will have. Providers have little cause to increase services to Children with High Needs based on this single change. -Also, the subsidy agency should already be providing information to families regarding high quality programs and although the plan calls for procedural changes, it is unclear what those changes will be and how implementation will be different. This is not an ambitious plan.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	6

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's TQRIS has never been evaluated to see if there is a link between tier and program quality nor has there been evaluation of the relationship between TQRIS and child outcomes or school readiness. The State has developed a plan to evaluate the relationship between TQRIS tier and program quality but the plan is not a High Quality Plan and the evaluation has several flaws. The evaluation will be conducted by a contractor but no requirements for the contractor have been identified. The Plan designates that 100 programs will be evaluated using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and that programs will reflect all program types, rural and urban areas, and programs that serve at least 20% of Children with High Needs and yet no information is given about how this sampling will occur at the program or classroom level. Finally, even if the evaluation does indicate a relationship between the ERS and program tier, the ERS is only one measure of quality and a single measure should not be the only indication of quality in the TQRIS. The timeline for implementation is very slow due to the recalibration in the State's TQRIS that took place in 2011. The State has programs that will not phase out of the old system until 2013 and the validation study will not begin until then even though the State could begin studying the connection before that time. No results will be reported to the Department of Human Services until 2015 and no mention is made of actions based on the results of the evaluation. No Plan has been established to examine the connection between TQRIS level and child outcomes or school readiness even though the State establishes that as a goal. Although the State is planning to design and implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, no mention is made of how this information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the TQRIS.

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)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	14
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

Various Agencies are collaborating to develop screening measures. For example, the Department of Education developed a Part C procedure manual for selecting screening instruments for children birth-3 and the Departments of Health and Human Services are redesigning mental health procedures to include a screening tool. The State currently screens 80,046 children with an initial or periodic screening as evidenced by Medicaid reports. No details are provided regarding the selection, understanding, sharing of results, or training. In the area of Formative Assessment, the State has purchased Teaching Strategies GOLD as a birth-K system. This tool addresses all Domains of School Readiness and has been found to be highly valid and reliable by The Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Furthermore, GOLD has been aligned to the Iowa Early Learning Standards, Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and Common Core State Standards for K. Although Teaching Strategies GOLD seems to be a valid and reliable formative assessment, the State does not provide other needed information. For example, the level of implementation is unknown. It is not clear how

many programs are using GOLD or how many children are being assessed. Furthermore, no information is provided regarding how Educators have been trained to administer GOLD or to utilize information. Additional information is also needed to determine how, or whether, the information collected is being used at the program or state level. Finally, no information is provided regarding encouragement or incentives to increase the number of programs implementing GOLD, how additional staff will be trained, or how training will be funded. Environmental Quality and adult-child interaction are addressed by increasing monitoring of TQRIS from level 5 to levels 4 and 5 but there is no program monitoring for programs at levels 1-3. The State Board of Education requires programs it supervises to implement the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS), Head Start Performance Standards, or NAEYC Accreditation. 90% of those programs implement the IQPPS which involves review by the Department of Education and Area Education Agencies, data collection, and tracking of corrective actions. It is not clear how the IQPPS impacts or assesses environmental quality or adult-child interaction. The State does not indicate whether it will maintain or change the system in place for these agencies. The State has a plan to improve monitoring and implementation of adult-child interaction. The State's plan is to follow the CAMP-Quality (CAMP-Q) model which is a research based system of professional development. The plan involves training Master teachers and site mentors to reliability in the CLASS instrument. Twenty programs that serve Children with High Needs will be identified and a teaching team is chosen from each. The site mentor supports that team in the implementation of CLASS and formative assessment. Each Year 9 more site mentors will be added each year. This plan is achievable but will only touch 223 teachers over the life of the grant at a cost of \$5.3M which is a large investment for the number of teachers and children impacted. No information is provided on how information will be shared between agencies to avoid duplication of efforts.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	6

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

Health and Safety is a menu category in the TQRIS; however, the State focuses efforts on physical health and does not provide evidence in the narrative that behavioral screening or follow-up occur or that children's social and emotional development is supported through the Standards. While there is mention of legislation to regulate the amount of television that can be viewed while in care there is no mention of or plan to address the promotion of healthy eating habits or improving nutrition. CCNCs provide many hours of consultation to programs as well as reviewing files and provided assessments. The CCNCs review child files to ensure EPSDT timelines and well-baby/well-child exams are completed. The CCNC prepares a parent letter explaining what is needed and then gives guidance and coaching to the care provider to ensure follow-up of the need is addressed. This is a family friendly approach and gives the care provider the information and support needed to work with the family on health needs identified yet no information is provided regarding how the Early Childhood Educator is involved in this process and how the Educator provides support to the child or family. The State has three plans in this area all of which address physical health and neglect behavioral and developmental needs of children. In the first plan, two state-level staff will be hired to train local CCNCs. Funds will be distributed to local Maternal and Child Health Agencies who will be the funding source for the CCNCs. The State expects to spend \$7.7M and this is one of the bigger projects in the budget. Based on this information, the targets for increasing the number of children with High Needs who receive screening is too low. The second plan is to develop and implement improved Health and Safety assessment tools and the assessment process used by the CCNCs. This plan has two high points which are 1.) training the CCNCs in the new tools and processes and 2.) reviewing the TQRIS to ensure all Health and Safety components are embedded in the point system. The drawback to this plan is that no mention of training for Early Childhood Educators in the assessment tools, assessment process, or QRS changes, if made, is mentioned. The third plan is to improve the Standards of Practice for CCNCs. This will involve Preceptor training to initiate the new Standards, fidelity measures for the new tools, and an outcomes database to track the onsite assessment

used by the CCNCs. Again, training the CCNCs to be able to pass that knowledge on to Early Childhood Educators will have a positive impact on children but it appears that Program administrators will receive the training and no information is provided regarding how information will be shared with classroom staff. One of the final points of each plan is how the State will address of Children with High Needs. The State indicates that many children are in provider care in the state and draws the conclusion that Children with High Needs are included in that total number and are therefore addressed. More specific information is needed on how these efforts will be targeted to Children with High Needs. The only special population of Children with High Needs that is addressed specifically are children who may have undiagnosed delays. The term "Children with High Needs" is more inclusive than that one category and the needs of other children who fit within the definition are never specifically addressed.

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.	40	23
<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>The State has been in the process of developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework since 2009 but it does not appear to have substantially implemented the WKC at this time. Following development of the Framework, the State initiated a 4 year implementation plan but no details are provided regarding where they are in the implementation. Within the State's narrative, they indicate that a plan has been developed to complete work on developing a progression of credentials for teachers and family support workers but in the plan actually presented the State provides no information regarding how that will be accomplished. The State does not present a plan to address creation of a progression of credentials. The State plans to align institutions of higher education with the Teaching Staff Competencies to increase access to higher education coursework that aligns with State goals and expectations. The State's timeline only provides one year to complete the alignment which is not a realistic expectation for the size of the task nor is it realistic considering the lack of letters of support from institutions of higher education. Again, the State does not outline a plan for how this goal will be achieved.</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)

The State currently only assesses literacy at kindergarten entry but has a plan to design and implement a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State commits to the assessment covering all Domains of School Readiness and ensuring the assessment is aligned with Early Learning Standards as well as the Core Standards K-12 but no further information is provided in this area to support these assertions. The State will hire state and national experts in the areas of Children with High Needs and diverse learners, early childhood education, and assessment. The State plans to involve curriculum experts from Head Start, Child Care, and Area Education Agencies. Since no information is provided about the actual assessment the issues of validity and reliability cannot be addressed. The State's timeline is aggressive but it is not realistic to plan a pilot study including professional development in 2013 followed by modifications to the instrument and the professional development and fully implement in 2014. Also, the budget does not seem to be sufficient to support the project. For example, only one employee will be hired to coordinate this large project. Also, the supply budget listed for the Department of Education includes materials for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment but sufficient information is not provided regarding how these funds will be used to know if the budget is sufficient for the task. Finally, it is unclear if the State has budgeted for teacher pay to attend training on the Assessment or for trainers. These costs will be substantial and it is not clear how they are addressed. The State plans on using funding from ESEA as well as RTT-ELC but again it is not clear what will be funded by these sources and whether the funding will be sufficient.

	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)

At this time, State Agencies collect data but data systems do not communicate or share information which indicates a statewide early childhood data system is partially implemented. The State has developed a High Quality Plan to create, design, and deploy an integrated data system that is federated so each entity retains ownership over their own data. The State has carefully identified several steps to the development of this system including assembling a planning team and a planning/implementation team. The teams will determine questions to be answered by the system and will create common definitions to ensure all required data elements are present in the new system. The State has an ambitious timeline and has identified a few things that will keep the timeline on track. Of particular interest, the planning/implementation team will include a governance body that has the power to make decisions. This team will resolve any policy issues as they develop so the project can continue to move forward rather than get bogged down in policy issues. Once this data system is in place, users will be able to access information through a hub. Data will be real-time so users make decisions based on current information. Since each Agency will still "own" its data in this federated system, the Agencies can continue to protect the privacy and confidentiality of its clients.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	144

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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 (P)(3)

The State is not currently implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that addresses the elements of Table (A)(1)-12. Instead, the current assessment meets only some of the required literacy areas. The State presents a plan to design and implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that includes all required elements but the State's Plan is not detailed enough to demonstrate that the timeline is realistic, that the budget is reasonable, or that the project will realistically result in a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is valid, reliable, and fully implemented. The limited amount of details provided in these areas indicates the State will be unable to understand the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.

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

The State has not presented a comprehensive plan to build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning an development Programs for Children with High Needs as demonstrated in the comments made in response to each Focused Investment Area. Of particular note is the lack of evaluation tools for programs and for child outcomes. For example, the State never plans to assess the environmental quality of programs at TQRIS levels 1-3 which will prevent those programs from receiving valuable feedback that would help them improve. Also, the State does not have a coherent or well developed plan to implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment and indeed the limited details in the budget and implementation timeline indicate the plan has not been fully developed. As documented in the Focused Investment Areas, the State does not meet the Absolute Priority.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # IA-5012

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:49 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 18. Includes detailed text and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section.

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 14.

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)

Goals are clearly articulated. They are appropriate for the grant and ambitious and would appear to be achievable given the work that the state has already undertaken. The overall summary presents an informative overview of the activities in each of the goal areas. The rationale for the selection of the Comprehensive Assessment system was well developed and clearly communicated the state's reasoning as to the importance of such a system. The rationale for the selection of health, behavioral and development needs was less clearly presented. "To build on historic strength" does not provide much information as to why the state selected this as an area. The rationale for the selection of D1, work force, was described in terms of the work the state needs to do which is information about activities to be undertaken, not about why the state selected this area. The rationale for selection of the kindergarten assessment was not well articulated unlike the rationale for selection of the data system which was well developed. Since the rationales are only one of the criteria, the overall quality of this section was considered to be medium-high.

	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 lead agency (DE) is identified. The grant management team is sensible but there appeared to be some lack of clarity in roles. It was not clear why there is a need for the Leadership/governance team since there seem to already be a council with the same membership (the ECI State Board). The role of the Leadership team was not described. The ECI stakeholder alliance was clearly described with regard to membership and function. More information was needed on who will be responsible to see that the proposed activities of the grant are implemented, for example, who will oversee each of the projects. Procedures for resolving disputes were not addressed. Scopes of work for the participating agencies were included with responsibilities delineated. The list of stakeholders and the corresponding support letters were impressive but the absence of higher education was a definite weakness as was the lack of support letters from a broader group of stakeholders including community groups. The current level of implementation was judged to be partial and the quality of the response was considered medium.

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

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 narrative preceding the budget tables is disjointed. It presents some useful information about other sources of funding for the grant activities but provides little information about the nature of the activities that will be supported by the grant. It is clear the state plans to leverage other resources which is a strength. Budgets for participating agencies are presented. Overall, the greatest amount of resources are being expended for the CCNC program which seems unjustified because this is the area where the state made a case that it was already a national leader. There appears to be considerable work that needs to be done on the progression of the credentials and yet this project receives a relatively small amount of the funds. There appears to be no grant money being used for evaluation of any of the planned activities. The creation of a Grant Coordinator is a strength of the overall management of the grant. The Iowa Growth Fund is a good idea but given that it will reach so few programs, it does not appear to be a cost effective use of grant funds. The basis for most of the budget figures was not presented so it was impossible to determine if the costs were reasonable and necessary, for example, how was the figure of \$1.963 million arrived at for the progression of credentials work or the figure of \$8.2 million that gets distributed to local areas. Overall, there was little explanation of how the annual project budget was derived. It was

impossible to access sustainability from the information presented because it was not clear which components of which activities and to what extent were to be supported from state sources. The budget discussion was considered to be of medium low quality.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	4

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 is currently partially implemented in that the state has a tiered rating system but it is missing some of the critical program standards (comprehensive assessment, and effective data practices). Insufficient information was presented to conclude that the state's plan for the TQRIS reflects high expectations for program excellence. The ERS is only required for Level 5 programs with a plan to include Level 4. This is not consistent with the criteria for high expectations or for a comprehensive assessment system. Without measures of environmental quality at the lower levels, the programs in the lower tiers have no information on where they stand on this critical aspect of program quality. There was insufficient evidence presented to make the case that the ELGs are a meaningfully part of the system. More detail was needed on the extent to which providers are exposed to the ELGs in the training courses. There appears to be no expectation for use of the ELGs built into the system. Health promotion practices are a well-defined component of the TQRIS but again, more evidence to demonstrate how these are assigned to levels to show high expectations was needed. There was insufficient information provided to substantiate that the standards are meaningful and measurable. The application asserts that the standards are based on nationally recognized practices but does not show how the state's standards are consistent with high standards from other sources. More information about the extent to which these policies are incorporated into the TQRIS and at what levels was needed. The Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards are listed in the table (b)(1)-1 but are not addressed in the narrative so it is unclear how they relate to the QRIS. The plan was considered to be of low medium quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	5

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)

Currently a relatively small proportion of the state's programs are participating in the QRS indicating partial implementation. The plan calls for significant strengthening of licensing of home providers by 2013 which will make many more providers eligible for the QRIS. It is not clear why Part B preschools are not currently participating and are not considered candidates for inclusion in the QRIS in future years. The Growth Fund sounds like an innovative and effective approach to improving financial viability but the application needed to provide evidence of effectiveness. It is a strength that it is assisting rural programs but it will reach a relatively small number of programs at a rather high cost. Also, if the intent is to increase the viability of the centers, it is unclear why this would be expected to result in an increase in the number of children served. It appears to be targeted to keeping existing centers operating. The plan includes a number of appropriate goals to support increased participation in the QRIS. The rationale for increasing the bonuses is very well presented and makes a good case. What is reported as the rationale for the other activities describes them rather than providing evidence as to why these activities were selected. The connection between some of the activities and increased program participation was not obvious and was not explained. For example, having child care consultants provide training is a good support mechanism for higher quality but how does this encourage more programs to participate. Some discussion of how the targets were selected and why they are considered achievable was needed to allow an evaluation of whether the targets are ambitious and achievable. The plan was judged to be of low medium quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	6

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)

It was impossible to determine the extent to which a tool was being used across the state as part of the TQRIS. The ERS is identified as part of the system for tier 5 but no other information was presented to support current levels of actual use. Implementation was considered to be partial. The evidence provided in the application was insufficient to determine the reliability and validity of the tool being used. The application asserts that it is reliable without any evidence of how this is determined, who the raters are, or how they are trained. Much more information about the process for obtaining the ratings was needed. The project described in this section addresses requiring programs to participate in the ERS assessments to receive a level 4 ratings but this does not speak to the technical adequacy of the rating process (although it does address increasing access to quality programs so this was considered as part of B(4)). A strength of this section is that the state already has a variety of mechanisms in place for notifying families about the QRIS ratings and has plans to make even more information available (e.g., the number of points and the criteria met). It is unclear why the expansion to the data system to support the TQRIS will cost \$1.5 million. The section was considered to be medium low quality.

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

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)

Currently the state does have bonuses for achievement in place to encourage programs to continuously improve but these are not very effective as evidenced by the low participation rates in the QRIS and there does not appear to be much in place to help families access high quality programs. The current status is considered as partially implemented. The state provides training for providers in multiple ways but does not present any evidence on the accessibility of the training or the extent to which they are utilized. The existence of wraparound funding is a strength but there was no data presented on how many families this serves and there are no plans presented to expand it. It is a strength that CCR&Rs are held accountable for increasing participation in the QRIS but setting the bar at 9% is a low bar as is considering Level 3 a high quality program. The plans to address increasing participation address ways to make information more accessible to families by providing information at the time of CCA application and consumer awareness but more details were needed especially about the first activity. It appears that families will be given information about the benefits of selecting a provider participating in the QRIS but the emphasis should be on selecting a provider in the highest tiers. The nature of the outreach activities to be undertaken is not described. Embedding the information in the application process is a sustainable strategy which is a strength. The activities presented are ways to get information to families but there are no strategies to address whether the care accessible to families really meets their needs (e.g., for transportation, meals, etc.). The application is silent on addressing the needs of different types of learning programs such as Head Start and state pre-K. It is appropriate that the reimbursement structure for special needs children is addressed as a strategy but there is nothing in the plan to ensure that the needs of these children will be able to be addressed in the care willing to take them. The state presents no evidence that the providers have sufficient training to do this or that mechanisms will be put in place to help providers acquire this expertise. A collaborative effort with Part C and Part B 619 would have been one possible mechanism but there was no evidence that these programs are involved in the quality improvement. No information was presented as to why the states thinks its targets are achievable. Including Level 3 in the definition of high quality is not an ambitious target since these programs are not participating in the ERS and their levels of quality are unknown. The plan was of low 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)

There has been no work to date on validating the system as stated in the application. The application rightfully recognizes the relationship between the assessment activities which will provide the data on child outcomes and the ERS data collection in the introduction but the planned activities do not address the child outcomes data in the validation. The proposed plan for validation was too vague. The design for the validation needed to be presented. Saying that a contractor will develop a research design does not provide enough information to judge that the plan is high quality. For instance, it is good that the application included the number of programs in the sample (100) but without a research design there is no way to know whether this sample size is sufficient. The sample also did not appear to include Head Start. Much more information was needed about the procedures that will be followed in the validation. More information about the recalibration process was needed. It is not clear how "public will and resources" influence the calibration and suggests that resources will influence what is called high quality. The plan also did not address the important issue of how it will be determined whether the quality tiers are truly quality tiers for children with special needs, including programs that serve them does not address this point. It requires additional analyses. The plan was low 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)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	2
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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)
<p>The state has a few components of a comprehensive assessment system in place but different components are in place for different programs. Based on the information presented, the current level of implementation is minimal. A Part C screening manual was noted but information was not presented on who uses it or how widespread screening currently is in the state. Screening for 3 to 5 year olds was not addressed at all. The state's plans for expansion of screening activities were not addressed. There does not appear to be any current formative assessment but the state will be moving to formative assessment for the Shared Visions at risk preschool programs where it will be required. No evidence was provided that the local programs participated in or are supportive of the state's decision to use GOLD for which the state has acquired a license. The application is silent on the procedures which will be followed to support the adoption of formative assessment across all EC programs. No provisions are made for training educators on administering or using the results of assessments which will be a major undertaking for the statewide system. The ERS measure is in the QRS in which programs may choose to participate and very few programs are using it now and only those in the highest tiers will use it when the QRS is fully implemented. The interaction measures discussion addressed CLASS being used in Head Start but focused primarily on a project to improve teacher effectiveness that included use of the CLASS. Where and the states plans to support or promote the implementation of the CLASS as part of a plan for comprehensive assessment is</p>

not described. Improving teacher effectiveness is a valuable goal but the discussion needed to address how the plan will help teachers use assessment data and how the state would move to more widespread administration of the CLASS. The discussion of what is currently in place provided in this section did not support or elaborate on the earlier table in section A which suggested that multiple programs had various kinds of assessment in place. The only plan presented was a description of one project that will address expanding the number of teachers participating in the improvement project (which does use the CLASS). There was no vision or plan to build a comprehensive assessment system provided to address (C)(2). The quality of the plan was low.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

The state has made an impressive commitment toward addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of children with high needs through its Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) structure. The CCNC is only one mechanism for promoting health and from what is presented a number of components in the review criteria are not in place suggesting partial implementation. Data are presented on the number of health and safety assessments completed, the number of hours of consultation provided, and the number of contacts with child care providers substantiating the work the state has undertaken in this area. This section discusses several enhancements that are planned to this structure that include expanding the state infrastructure, revising the nursing assessment tools, and implementing improved standards of practice which are important activities but difficult to assign to the review criteria. The review criteria ask for a plan that establishes a progression of standards across levels of the program standards. The section does not discuss the progression of health standards in the QRS. The availability of the CCNCs has great potential to improve children's health but there was not enough information presented to show which programs (as a percent of all programs) these individuals work with. More information was needed to show the linkage between the programs standards, the programs, and the CCNCs. Although they may be available to all programs, there was no discussion of which programs use them or if there are enough CCNCs to address the needs of all programs. Much of the information presented addresses process. Far more information was needed about expected program (e.g., what percentage of programs will they work with each year?) and child level outcomes expected as a result. There is nothing in the plan addressing how the state plans to improve the number of early childhood educators who are trained in meeting the health standards. Improving nutrition also is not addressed. The narrative presents no information on why the state selected the targets it did. The targets do not increase much over the baseline but the numbers compared to the number of children with high needs suggest the state is already reaching a high percentage of children. More explanation of the numbers was needed. In sum, the section presents some interesting information about the state's plan to enhance the CCNC program but it did not address several of the review criteria. The plan was considered to be of medium quality.

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.	40	5
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>In 2009, the state took significant steps toward developing a framework. The group that produced the work made a number of good recommendations that could move the state closer to its vision – which is well articulated and consistent with a statewide EC System (i.e, the development of qualified, stable and well compensated work force across four sectors of service provision. The application does not make clear what the state has done in the intervening two years with the recommendations in the report. The report is a plan that addresses what needs to happen to build the framework but it is not a framework which leaves the state with much work to do in this area. The reports speaks clearly to the shortcomings in the state's current system which provides good information for starting points if the state chooses to make use of it. It was difficult to evaluate the extent to which a framework or a progression of credentials is currently in place or how well the recommendations for the revised framework address the key components of a framework because the information presented was spotty on the various components. The concept of evidence-based was addressed but there was minimal information in the section on the incorporation of the early learning standards and comprehensive assessment. The text needed to make a stronger case that the framework will address the key areas when it is completed. The vagueness of the information made it very difficult to ascertain where the state is with regard to a progression of credentials. The text notes that they have been "released" but the planned activities suggest they have yet to be embedded in credentials. Based on the information in the key activities description, this area is currently partially implemented because the state has competencies but has yet to implement the competencies. The recommendations clearly contain a series of progressions but evidence was needed that these recommendations had been or will be acted on. Much more was needed about how higher education would be involved in developing and implementing the plan to move forward especially because there was minimal evidence in the application of higher education's involvement in the development of the proposal. The description of key activities to be undertaken needed to be more detailed to make a convincing case that the state could really carry this out given the amount of work that is yet to be done in this area. For example, "embed TSCs across Iowa's PD system" is not an activity; it is an objective. The state needed to describe what it would do so this could happen. Nearly all of the "activities" are really objectives. Similarly, providing a listing of all the agencies that will be involved without linking them to specific responsibilities does not make a strong case that the state has the capacity to achieve its goal in this area. The plan was seen as low medium in quality.</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	10
<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>		

(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 currently has a kindergarten entry assessment but it only assesses literacy so it is partially implementing the requirements currently. The application conveyed a sense that the state is committed to expanding this assessment. The process the state will use to move forward in this area was described in sufficient detail and was sensible. The principles to be followed were presented and were appropriate. It was not clear why the state needs legislation to be able to enact the kindergarten assessment which only impacts the timeline. The plan has the legislation being enacted by winter of 2012 and there was no way to evaluate the reasonableness of this assumption. The discussion would have been stronger if there has been some acknowledgement of the extent of the scope of the undertaking, what challenges to implementation were likely to be encountered, how these had been anticipated, and how they would be addressed. Establishing the validity and reliability of the assessment is not addressed nor are there steps in the activities to address them. The application addresses how the assessment will be funded and that a major source of the funds will not grant money. The amount of funding in the grant for assessment seemed insufficient given that all the kindergarten teachers in the state will need to be trained but it is difficult to assess what activities the state funds and what activities the grant funds will cover. Another significant weakness was that the project activities did not include professional development for the teachers. More information about the activities required to include the assessment information in the SLDS would have strengthened this section. Since the current assessment data are in the SLDS, it is easy to assume that the state will be able to enter the new data as well but attention to this important implementation issue would have been helpful. There is a discussion about programs that do not have unique child identifiers which is irrelevant since by kindergarten all children are in the system. The quality of the plan was medium.

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state has some of the elements of an early learning data system in place (partially implemented). The plan presented to build the early learning data system was truly outstanding. The discussion addressed all of the criteria and did so in a very high quality way. There was extensive discussion of the process that would be used to include the Essential Data Elements including a governance structure for addressing interagency issues. The depth of the discussion conveyed an understanding of the complexity of the task. The application contained an appropriately detailed plan with relevant activities to move the state to a comprehensive data system. The presentation of a set of questions for the data indicated an understanding of the power of the data system and provided support that the data system would provide information that will be timely and relevant for continuous improvement. The discussion presented a thoughtful analysis of where the state is now and what needs to happen to move the state forward. The process for facilitating exchange of data and common data standards was well described and appropriate. A process for developing MOUs was included. The narrative was sufficiently detailed to make a convincing case that the state knows what needs to be done and will be able to implement its plan successfully according to the criteria. The discussion addressed the participating agencies and the essential data elements and was of high quality.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	111

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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 current kindergarten entry assessment does not meet the selection criteria and the proposed plan is not of sufficient quality to receive 70% of the points.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	No
<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 application has several very significant holes as indicated by the scoring and review comments for the development of a comprehensive assessment and the development of the workforce frameworks and progression of credentials. Given the low quality of these areas, it is difficult to conclude that the application contains a comprehensive and coherent plan that even minimally addressed how the state will build an early childhood system.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IA-5012

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 5:24 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, 12. Includes detailed text description of the core area and a list of sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Iowa has established goals and approaches to provide high quality needs for the children from birth through five. The state is in the process of implementing services and programs that will address these needs through the commitment of state agencies and programs. The state has provided some letters of support and the MOU of commitment for providing services and funding for programs that will assist by increasing programs that will serve the children with high needs. Some of the state's approaches or projects did not include information on steps and processes that would impact the population of high need students. The state provided information on the funding and investments that would support the programs and services that would serve families, communities, educators, and children. The state has a pledge of \$60,000,000 (approximately one-half of one percent of the state's budget) for a statewide voluntary preschool program that will services children that are four years of age. The state indicated that funding investments have increased by 59% for children with high needs from birth through five. There has been a increase in funding for state preschool by 192%, a 21% increase for IDEA part B and C and a 5% increase for Child Care Developments, and Head Start. The state indicated a locally-based preschool scholarship was made available through the Early Childhood Iowa (ECI), which include 54 local boards that supply early childhood services across the state. The state has funding for early childhood programs that has been in existence for the last 15 years. The state use funds and other agencies such as the Aaes Education Agency that support programs like the Shared Visions at-risk preschool funding in the amount of \$1,000,000. The state did not indicate the needs, program supports or program information on the Shared Visions at-risk preschool funding and the areas that receive this funding. The health component in this grant and throughout the grant emphasizes the types of services that will impact the families and children of high needs. The health department has made commitments to provide numerous services that will provide the children with a healthy start. The state identified several communities that were at risk in several of the counties. The state data from an assessment that was administered to 99 counties indicated that 15 counties were at-risk. The state indicated the areas that are at risk, such as rural, high needs population, low-come and low educational levels. The state did not indicate the types of services that will be provided to make some type of impact on these few communities. The state has indicated no plan to target other communities that exhibited these risks. The state did not indicate a timeline for

working with these communities and the length of commitment of services. The state is in the process of making changes to the Early Learning Standards that will include standards for infants and toddlers and preschool aged children. Also, the state is revising their standards on linguistic and culture that will meet the needs of the children such as English Language Learners. The state has a committee to oversee this process and will provide input which is the Diversity and School Readiness Committee. The state is in the process of selecting assessments that will provide data on the impact on the children being served. The state will use the Gold assessment system to evaluate the progress of children in the preschool programs. Many of the state's assessments will be on voluntary bases for some of the child care and preschool programs. The state will not receive data statewide from the programs who do not participate; this will make an impact on the outcomes. The state has indicated that it has a challenge with the comprehensive assessment system component that will provide screenings, measure environment and adult-child interaction. Iowa has no Kindergarten Entry Assessment and indicated that other assessment tools are utilized but has not provided a list of these screenings or assessments that will be administered. The use of assessment data and feedback assist teachers and programs to begin to close the achievement gap for students. The kindergarten entry assessment is a bridge between the preschool and kindergarten in creating the best instruction programs for children entering into the program and their needs. The state is developing the Family engagement component that will include establishing agencies to provide services to engage parents and their families. The state did not indicate some of the activities or trainings that would be provided for parents. The state provided only a few supports in the areas of the building blocks that address kindergarten entry, early childhood education, and the professional of early childhood educators. The state did not include the types of trainings for educators that enhance their professional skills. The state did not indicate the groups that will be involved in creating the kindergarten entry assessment. The state uses of services that will impact directly to early childhood education were not indicated. This is a medium response.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	16

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 has listed several goals to help succeed in implementing the state's plan. There are five goals that will guide their efforts such as: The state will focus on increasing credentials by providing the incentives for educators through the QRS system. The state's QRS will provide training opportunities for educators that will increase high quality programs. The use of the QRS will increase the home-based care providers to participate. The state's plan is to have early care health programs to increased quality care centers. The state will develop a educational workforce that will assist the professional staff. The state is making attempts to increase the participation in the QRS system by including some Title I programs such as Head Start. The QRS data system is designed on a 1-5 level system that will govern the licensing and credential for agency and preschool programs. This data tool will be effective for programs, services, educators, providers and parents in providing essential information. The data system will provide valuable information for parents on quality of programs, and services as well as the quality of staff. The state use of this data will help in gauging the direction of the plan and the necessary improvements that need to be made. The state is developing a professional development plan to increase high quality programs that will serve children with high needs. The state has indicated a set of six competencies that will guide the professional development. The use of the competencies will assist the state in implementing the goals they have planned. The state saw the need to have a workforce study conducted and provided some data on the educational levels of the staff gathered from the study. The information gathered from the study will give direction on the needs of staff and the support they will need to achieve the educational goals in their fields. (A table was indicated with the credential levels). The study indicated that information on the qualifications of professional staff will assist in increasing the high quality education for the state's children and high quality programs. The only data that was not indicated was the number of programs and the number of teaching staff that service child care and preschool programs. Iowa has indicated that there are challenges in having data available by various agencies on the services, programs, licensing, and credentials as well as providers. This is a 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)(3)

The state has developed a governance structure that will oversee the agencies roles and responsibilities that they have committed to. The state agencies have agreed to work with the state grant in implementing services and programs that will impact families and educators. The state selected as their lead agency the Department of Education, which will monitor the implementation of programs and services for staff, parents, providers, and children. This agency has made established a group of stakeholders and committee members that will ensure that the initiatives are being implemented, such as the health assessments for children from birth to five and the data systems. The health initiatives have a large support in this plan, and the early childhood educational needs are not emphasized in many of the initiatives. The state established a grant management team that will oversee the operation of the programs, funding, data, the goals and timelines for each of the agencies and projects in the grant's plan. The team has not indicated the strategies and activities that will be monitored in the project plan. The monitoring of these projects and goals will benefit the programs and staff on the progress and commitments of agencies and their services. The state has selected various agencies to with meeting the goals of the plan. A stakeholders group was established to provide direct services for cultural and language support for communities that will be impacted. The Child Development Coordinating Council provides funds for at-risk programs for children birth to five. The state included a small amount of letters of support for their programs. The charts and tables indicated numerous agencies and committees but they do align with all of the services and programs of the state's plan. The state has put in place a system that will assist in the overall operation of the grant. The state has appointed lead agencies and personnel that will monitor programs and services in keeping their commitments. This is a medium response.

	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)

The state has indicated agencies and investments that will provide funds for various programs and services for sustainability such as the one-time investments and Department of Education. The programs and services that funds will target are: • Professional development framework • Kindergarten Entry Assessment • Family Support • Comprehensive early childhood development system • Early care, health development • Education professional development. All of these services will assist in creating a high quality programs that will support families, children with needs and educational staff. The budget funding for the health initiatives is a large amount (9,572,901) that is more than the educational (9,520,411) with only \$8,000 for stipends for teachers, and professional development. The state indicates that the management team will oversee the operations of the projects and programs; the grant is adding a grant coordinator to work with the lead agency seems overlapping of positions. The state provided only a few supports in the areas of the building blocks that address kindergarten entry, early childhood education, and the professional of early childhood educators. The state did not include the types of trainings for educators that enhance their professional skills. The state did not indicate the groups that will be involved in creating the kindergarten entry assessment. The state uses of services that will impact directly to early childhood education were not indicated. This is a medium response.

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)

The QRS system will be implemented in the preschool programs and with agency services that will provide data, there are some programs that may participate on a voluntary bases, such as child care providers. The state has establish requirements within the QRS system proceures, that are a rating system from 1-5 making five the highest rating. The ratings will provide various opportunities for providers, educators, and program services who participated with incensive and educational assistance. In order to become a participate of the QRS there are some regulations such as licensing and credentialing of programs and staff. There is no consideration for rural and some urban areas that are facing poverty, which may impede on them achieving the levels required for incentives and additional services. The state has indicated a training on the early development standards for infants and toddlers. There are some changes that need to be addressed that will impact the training of providers, to make sure that the trainings are meaningful and that they focus on the cultural awareness of all groups regardless of age. This is an important issue for teaches to be aware of considering the various cultures and languages that they will encounter. The professional trainer should be able to give positive and meaningful strategies in helping educators to communicate effectively. The procedure for a comprehensive assessment is lacking completion on screening of evaluations. The state only provides an environmental rating in which they use Environment Rating Scales (ERS). The use of this instrument is only given to providers who have reached a certain level (5). There are providers who may not reach this level, but need this tool to assist in making improvements to their centers or home care facilities. The emphasis on using measurement tools is to help measure as a starting point and how to progress from there. The state indicates that the rating structure for home and centers can be found in Appendix B-1-1 and B-1-2. The state discussed that the QRS require points for professional development for both home and providers. They must meet their level system, by 3-5 in order to receive this training opportunity. This plan needs some adaptations to make it high quality; it leaves providers that cannot meet these terms without any support. The state discusses the need to have high quality programs that will receive the necessary training and educational opportunities. Even though some of the providers are not at these levels the state does not seem to provide opportunities to them to increase the quality of their programs. This same point system carries over to the Family Engagement Strategies where providers must again reach such points. The state indicated how programs can earn points by encouraging orientation with new parents, and assuring the policies and procedures are provided to the parents. Iowa has integrated health and safety into their QRS system which provides information to various agencies as well as providers. The state indicated that the use of the QRS system gives many of the providers' ways to gain points through using this standard. The providers who receive 3-5 points will have the opportunity to have a child care nurse consultant visit their site and provide them with information on current health issues , provide classes on a college level on health and safety. This would be a program that would benefit many communities as well as providers. The child care nurse brings a wealth of information to the site and is able to review and assess children's needs. The use of the nurse in low-income and poverty areas would bring some vital information for parents, as well as services that are available for their families. The use of a nurse consultant will provide needed information. This response is substantially implemented and of medium quality.

	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)

(B)(2) The state indicated that appendix 10 has a TQRIS Participant Manual. 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 provides teachers and programs that have high quality programs key incentives. 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. 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 safe guard from overlapping services. The state has not considered addressing those families that do not have access to computers or have the technical skills to use this data online, particularly the rural areas that do not have the facilities to provide this type of service. This is a medium quality response that is partially implemented.

	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 indicated several tools for monitoring and rating such as the QRS where providers can be rated. There is no post rating monitoring system, to gauge the resources, so the state has to make adjustments. The state's DHS agency will provide information to families through referrals and the QRS ratings that are posted. Two other services that provide information are Kinder Track and Child Care Provider Registry, both of which provide a wide range of information for parents and providers. The Training Registry will provide information on programs and staff (accreditation, employees, educational levels, training received) The registry will indicate if this information is reported by the person or the programs. This information would be important for providers, agencies, and schools for background knowledge on programs or persons and are engaged in services. Unfortunately, this information is not accessible through other data systems and not connected to the grant for negative motives. The state will make increases in the number of assessments being implemented. The more programs that complete the ERS assessments which only level 5 programs can participate will guarantee that they will meet the high quality standard. Providing programs with bonuses help make quality improvements and more programs to complete the ERS assessments. The state indicates that the level 4 providers are not in the QRS data system these programs will be overlooked and will receive no bonuses. The level system is not consistent and does not align with the QRS data system. The increasing of data on providers will impact the regulated providers serving children from low-income families from diverse backgrounds and children with special needs. This response was of medium quality and partially implemented.

	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)

B4 Promoting access to high quality learning The state's use of program funds to establish an incentive program that will encourage as well as promote more opportunities for providers to meet the requirement of the QRS system is a landmark goal. Through meeting the QRS system requirements it affords providers to become licensed and will receive additional training. The use of this system may be an effective tool in encouraging providers to participate, and to become licensed and rated in the QRS system. The providers that accomplish these levels will be listed in the QRS system for parents to view. This is a benefit for the parents to have the option to view the child care services that will meet the needs of their children. There are some providers who have not reached these levels to receive opportunities or incentives, but have centers that meet the needs of children. Unfortunately, the centers that do not meet the requirements, who really need this type of support, will be left out. The use of a target to assist providers that are near reaching the required levels can use this type of advice for their program. Especially providers in rural areas that do not have all the resources those other providers may be receiving, and sometimes these rural areas are found to have many of the children with high needs. The state's use of wrap-around program funded by the CCA has provided parents with additional support for their children. The targeted population of children that receive this service from Head Start, Shared Vision at-risk preschool programs and other agencies funding. The wrap-around service ensures that children in high quality programs have a full day opportunity. The state's use of this program assists families that are working or attending school to obtain a higher level of education. The state needs to indicate how many wrap-around programs are available and the number of children that are being served. The use reimbursement rate program will assist parents that are having hardships and that have children with special needs. The revision of the consumer awareness campaign that will assist low income families on the important of selecting high quality care that will meet your children's needs is a program to re-establish. The state will have several agencies that will be responsible for implementing these activities such as the DHS who will make sure the employees manual will be reviewed and communication as well as training for staff. The state did not indicate how many children were being serviced in the wrap-around program and the target areas. The state provides the use of a reimbursements rate program to assist parents with hardships and children with special needs, but the allocations will be modified. The impact of the changing of allocations will impact the families, and the areas it serves. This meets the medium quality and is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	6

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 two goals in this areas one is to validate the child care Quality Rating System (QRS) and to establish the tiers that will include various levels of quality. The second goal relates to the impact of the QRS system and the changes that will affect the children's school readiness. The plan is to have 100 programs reach QRS levels 2-5 and participate in the Environmental Rating Scale Assessment (ERS). They will also have the preschool programs and licensed centers and school based-programs involved in the assessment. The use of assessors to implement the assessments will be contracted through the DHS. The contracting agencies will submit a plan for the research and report for DHS approval. After the plan has been approved who will receive this information such as stakeholders, various agencies and committees. The use of this data can provide support for programs in need of upgrading the quality of the classrooms or centers. The state needs to include a timeline over the grant's period of how this will be achieved. The state use of the environmental assessment only used by programs that reach 2-5 levels will limits the data provided. The other classrooms in the grant will not have the opportunity to have this tool administered in their setting for reflection on the necessary improvements that are needed. This response is medium-low 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)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The state's development of a comprehensive assessment system will provide effective use of resources to promote the early learning and development for young children. The use of this system will give programs information that guides them to finding the best types of services for young children. The assessment is a feedback tool that directs programs as to how effective their services are and in reaching the goals they have set. The use of the comprehensive assessment system in Iowa has been a challenge; the state has put other screening in place through the Department of Public Health. This health assessment will not be an informative screening on the academic achievements of children. The GOLD assessment will be used to assess children from birth through kindergarten. The assessment has 38 research-based objectives and includes screening on all domains. The GOLD assessment is aligned with Iowa's early learning standards, which is important for validity of the assessments and that it meets the standards that the state has established. The state's focus will be on using the ERS assessment for improving quality care to measure the classrooms. The Department Education developed an Infant and Toddlers Quality Program Standards for improving the quality of infant and toddler care aligned with an accredited program NAYEC. The use of this tool will be of great help for the infant and toddler program. The feedback will guide better care and drive instruction that will make an impact on the youngest of the state's children. By using this tool, the state assess young children and provide feedback and in-sight on their

development stages to the families and programs. This is the first step to informative data on how to help children with disabilities before entering into the preschool programs. Many of the preschool teachers had the opportunity to be involved in the CAMP-Q training model. This research-based program was developed by the University of Iowa. The state did not indicate how many teachers participated in the activities of the training. The state will use the CLASS observation instrument that focuses on the classroom environment and teacher-child interaction. The state failed to indicate how many classrooms will be using this tool. The CLASS instrument is a tool that will assist teachers in the classroom on how to build safe and truthful relationships with their students and the importance of communication. A study was conducted with teachers using the CLASS tool; they found that Head Start teachers that used the CLASS instrument scored higher than the control group who did not use the tool. This study was done with CAMP-Q program and the state provided the results in a table. The state outlined the key goals for improving the quality of early learning and development programs in a block form with the indicators at the top. The activities and the types of training weren't be indicated. The state failed to identify the targets of the assessments that will implement the childcare programs, preschool or Head Start programs. The state is not including the staff training for implementing these assessments. The state has indicated a need to work on comprehensive assessments as a challenge. The state needs to indicate sustainability of the Camp-Q training services. The state has focused on the need to have assessments that will provide information on children with high needs. The grant's direction in developing the appropriate assessment will provide the data they will need to drive their programs. There are some areas that the state must continue to work on such as the standards for training and education. The state initiative to seek other states on information on assessment is an effective approach ensuring that the implementation will be successful and provide the outcomes on the children and programs. The plan is partially implemented with medium quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	9

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

The state provided a list of evidence for the various sections in this criterion. The use of health standards used in Program Standard will be revised for improvement. State's Standards will include changes that have been made previously in health services such as health and safety standards, health and literacy among parents and children. This plan is inclusive of all health and physical needs. The state has included integrated health standards and practices into the early learning environments. The state needed to expand the Child Care Nurse Consultant program, this service will impact communities in rural or urban setting. Many of the parents have no information on many of the health needs of their families as well as where to go for services. Iowa saw the need to establish a policy that will make a difference in many of the child care and home-based programs as well as impact the children's home setting. The state requested that the providers create a policy at their centers or home-base on the hours of television children can watch (31.5% did respond and wrote a policy). In addition the programs are to include a plan for physical activity for each day (39% did write a plan). The choice to use various agencies data systems will provide feedback to programs on methods of payment, assisting families in accessing health services, dental and medical and preventive care, and referrals. The CCN will provide information from the National data about the child care nurse program that has contributed to the increased number of children with updated immunizations and a regular source of medical and dental care. This is a strong program for the state in achieving high quality needs for children. The use of a block plan indicated the goals, activities, milestones, and parties that are responsible and the funding source. This plan gives a scope of the programs efforts under this criterion. The state's budget outline indicated the need to hire a consultant to work with stakeholders; there are trainings that have been designed for stakeholders to participate in as well as conferences. Also, stakeholders will have access to data that can be accessed on various programs and services. The state has created many component in their plan to address the health needs of children as well as the services for the families that will

assist in making health changes in the communities. The state placed a great deal of emphasis on the health care component and does not address some of the early childhood issues and components. The state did not adequately address the questions as to the promoting of healthy eating habits and improving nutrition in the plan. The use of trainers to train staff on these issues of health is a budget factor that needs reflection. This is partially implemented and medium 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.	40	24

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 created four sectors in the Iowa's Professional development framework for early childhood system that will impact the plan's expectations. The state has an array of agencies that will provide support services for the professional development framework for teacher's and family support worker competencies. The state will use various certificates from universities and councils programs for the staff and for families. The state saw the need to provide more opportunities for the workforce to achieve high quality programs. The state has implemented some competencies and standards that will increase the professional development levels of the workforce and this will be a support. The state is creating a framework that will include diversity to make staff more culturally aware. The state show's an awareness of the population of the communities that they serve. The use of data from the state's QRS and TSC will collect data and information and disseminate it to the various programs agencies, and services. Iowa has a leadership team that is working to improve the Child Care Registry to meet the nation's standards on verification, and training system. The need to have quality programs can be formed from the data this system can provide. The state is working on a high quality plan to address the need for credentialing and degrees for both teachers and family support workers. In order to meet the needs of the staff many of college and institution are committed to align their programs to work within this framework. The state has a group of agencies and programs that will implement the outlined activities for the professional development Workforce and framework. The state is committed by the state to see that the competencies of Workforce framework plans are implemented to ensure that children with high needs have access to high quality preschools. The state did not indicate the six competencies of the teaching staff but included other competencies and how they will directly provide the necessary training to meet these competencies. This is 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	11

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 will use various programs and agencies to develop an assessment tool that will be embedded with the standards, and all domains. The assessment will be age appropriate for the children in the program. The Iowa Department of Education will work with national experts in the field of assessment to develop a draft document that will guide in reviewing the reading assessment instruments. The effort will focus on making sure that all domains are covered and that cultural appropriateness is included. The use of various agencies that understand the levels that are at the kindergarten level, have not indicated the children with special needs. This is a target that should be included; this is addressed in many standards and assessments. The bridging of the preschool program is an important transition for the young learner. The kindergarten experience will be a higher challenge for the children. The need to have data on children in the program is essential. This data provides the kindergarten teaching staff with a portfolio of this student's strengths and weakness. The use of this data will assist teachers in planning for students that have high needs, disabilities and are English Language Learners. The kindergarten experience is also connected with the parents. The data shared with the teacher will help inform parents of the instruction and plans for this child's success. The state's aim is to provide a smooth transition into kindergarten once the children leave the preschool environment. The state has provide information on the state's legislation requiring that reading assessments be evaluated and the kindergarten entry program be implemented. The state indicated that they receives data on the assessments that are implemented in kindergarten this gives the state a landmark of how the children are progressing in kindergarten and the outcomes of the practices that are being applied in the classrooms as well as reaching the benchmarks. This report on assessment data is provided to state levels and to counties as well as to the public agencies. The state provides a block outlined that indicated the key goals and strategies that will be implementing in the course of the grant. The state will pilot the kindergarten entry assessment in 2013 with statewide implementation in the fall of 2014. The state's budget for professional training is lacking adequate funds to provide the trainers and stipends for teaching staff. The state's budget emphasis seems to be on the Health component. The state did not indicate the number of programs or areas that will participate in the 2013 pilot. The use of a timeline for improvements of programs after receiving feedback from the pilot will impact the fully administered assessment statewide. This is a medium response and partially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state decided to generate questions that will guide their stakeholders in making decisions regarding the programs, instruction, services and policies/practices for improvement. The questions will help with programmatic decisions related to families with children with high needs, early learning and development programs, and early childhood educator workforce. The questions are a unique process in looking at how to plan and implement a data system, the outline of questions will guide the group to stay on target. The state indicates that pieces of data are in multiple data systems across the state government and are not easy to obtain. The state is developing a plan that will collect data from various programs and agencies that impact the early childhood learning standards, practices and performances. This will be helpful to the educational staff. The uses of this plan will also expand to include the Workforce development. The grant will provide an interoperable early childhood system to retrieve and report data from several agencies and the state library. The state provides a graph that depicted the agencies that will be a part of this plan's system. The state has appointed a state agency to direct and guide the successful completion of the project for data system including the Essential Data Element. The state saw the need to put in place a monitoring system to ensure that the commitments of services were being implemented. This plan is substantially implemented and meets high quality.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	151

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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 (P)(3)

(a)The state has not developed a kindergarten entry assessment. (b) the state has in selected E(1)The state responded to E1 but did not earn 70 percent of the points.

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

The state has provided data on funding that will assist in the implementations of the various projects and services. The state's budget gives a picture of allocations for many positions that will impact the health component, but the lack of funds to address the teaching and education components that affect the children and families as well as the quality of education. The state has some inconsistencies in how they will provide trainings and assessments in some of the projects and program areas. The state has indicated that some of the data systems are not efficient enough to provide the necessary data to other agencies or services. The state has made an effort to look at the various challenges that they have and how to resolve them such as the kindergarten entry assessment. Also, the effective use of pilot assessments target of what areas or programs will receive assessments. The family component that is being developed will assist parents in gaining information on the various programs and child care providers and agencies for support. The study failed to provide more detail as to who will be responsible and accountable for the operations of each project and goals and that the services are making the impact on the populations served. The state has some ideas of how to utilize the grant funds to increase and improve services and programs for our children with high needs and their families. There are some loopholes in some of the stages in implementation of services and program components that relate to licensing, QRS system, and the education requirements/incentives. The state failed to indicate some of the competencies in the grant. The state budget failed to indicate how some of the programs and services will provide sustainability. The state indicated many of the data system are not established and will not provide data to all programs and services.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IA-5012

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:25 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

A.1. The state of Iowa has increased their investment in early learning programs and services by 59% since 2007. State funds for early childhood programs have tripled in the last fifteen years. For example, Shared Vision, an at risk preschool program that was started in 1989 received a million dollar increase in funding 2007. At the same time Iowa launched its statewide voluntary preschool program with a financial commitment of \$60,000,000 to ensure that every four year old had access to high quality early childhood education. Family support services served 17,396 families with \$15,577,384 in state funding. Sixty six thousand children with High Needs are being served in different types of early learning and development programs with a total state investment of \$210,566,697. The number of children with high needs participating in early learning and development programs has increased specifically in the state funded preschool programs. Other programs have a slight increase. The total number of low income children from birth to five in the state is 97,000. The fact that the state is serving about 66% of children with high needs through early learning and development programs is a strength and reflects a strong indicator that the state is committed to serving this population. In the application, the state proposes a plan to assess the quality of these programs and offer more high quality programs. State legislation increased the number of children covered by the Children Health Insurance program, increased childcare regulations, increased the frequency of inspections of child care homes and centers and provided funding to offer oral screening and early periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment.(EPSDT) A Quality Rating system was launched to measure quality improvement for child care providers along five dimensions. Since 2007 an appropriation has been allocated to fund ECE professional development. These examples of legislation demonstrate the state's effort to build a high quality early learning and development system. The Iowa Early Learning Standards(IELS) include the essential domains of school readiness and are available for Infant/ Toddlers and Preschool children. Revisions are in process to address culturally and linguistically appropriateness. The IELS are aligned to all programs offered through the Department of Education, Head Start and educator competencies. The following three components: NAEYC accreditation, the Iowa IELS and Head Start performance standards are being used to develop a Comprehensive Assessment system. The Iowa Public Health department tracks child health status data and provides health promotion activities including screening and preventive dental care. Family engagement

strategies are required in all Department of Education programs. A Family Support Leadership Group oversees activities. Iowa developed a framework for the professional development of early childhood educators based upon a resource from NAEYC. Teaching staff and family support competencies have been developed. Pathways and articulations are being established. TEACH Early Childhood IOWA is a successful education and compensation initiative whose purpose is to develop public and private partnerships to invest in the early childhood workforce. Over 1200 educators have earned credits and degrees since it was established in 2003. The state has made progress toward creating the building blocks except for the two areas below. The state does not have a comprehensive kindergarten entry assessment nor an early childhood data management system. The table A-1 is incomplete because it does not provide detailed information on the number of children from specific age groups. In summary, the state has made significant financial contributions to the development and implementation of early learning and development programs including legislation that has increased access to insurance for children, improved licensing, and professional development for early childhood educators. The state does not have a comprehensive assessment system that include a kindergarten entry assessment nor a early childhood data management system but they will address these components in their Plan.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	14

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

A.2 The applicant has identified the following five ambitious goals: build on current QRS and increase participation rates for children with high needs; define, collect, analyze and benchmark growth, fully implement Iowa's comprehensive early learning plan; build an integrated data base system; and integrate Iowa's early learning system with the K-12 reform. Although the plan appears ambitious, it may be difficult to achieve within the time frame of this four year funding based on the missing building blocks of a kindergarten entry assessment and an early childhood data management system. The applicant has expanded on the above five goals showing how it will improve program quality by increasing the number of center and home based programs participating in the QRS system and supporting increased training and certification linked to the QRS. In the fall, the state will begin collecting formative assessments in Teaching Strategies GOLD as one pathway to create a common child outcomes measurement system. The system will provide stakeholders access to information on all early learning programs and allow them to identify strategies to close the achievement gap. The state does not clearly articulate how High Quality plans under each selection criterion will result in an effective reform agenda. The applicant has selected C2 criterion because the use of comprehensive assessments to guide instruction and program quality is the weakest area of implementation among all the quality program standards identified, C3 was selected because of the long standing collaboration with health in several projects that have ensured that Head Start programs are up to date on EPSDT and this service could be expanded to other children with high needs in early childhood programs. D.1. was selected so that the state can develop the credential progression building on its knowledge and competency framework. E1 was selected to link Iowa's school reform vision to this initiative. E.2. Applicant presents a rationale to take the progress from the classroom and program level to the state. In summary, the applicant has set five goals that may be difficult to achieve due to the fact that two of the building blocks have not been developed and a third building block, the use comprehensive assessments, is the weakest area of implementation. The rationale for the focused investments areas justifies the states choices.

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

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

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

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency

governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

A.3 The applicant has created an organizational structure that demonstrates its commitment to a state plan by building upon existing committee and boards. The Department of Education is the lead agency and the existing Early Childhood state agencies directors and designee will be members of the Leadership Governance Team. A Grants Management Team which consists of representatives from each state agency will develop a communication plan and provide input for decision making across the participating agencies with guidance from the Leadership Governance Team. The participating agencies roles and responsibilities related to governance are defined in the MOUs. An Early Childhood Iowa State Board was created through legislation to create a vision for a comprehensive early care, health and human services system. There is also an ECE Stakeholders Alliance that will be involved in the grant but their role is not defined. The applicant provides a comprehensive list of state agencies and other early learning organizations detailing their roles and responsibilities. The ECI Stakeholders Alliance representing early childhood members and the Interagency Coordinating Council-Part C that provides representation from parents and families of children with high needs will be sought out for ongoing input and provide updates. There is a signature from the authorized representative of each participating agency. B. MOU's are included in the application from the participating state agencies and include detailed roles and responsibilities. C. The seventeen letters of support from statewide groups identify key areas that they will contribute to assist in creating a high quality plan to serve children with high needs however letters are not included from community groups and higher education representatives. To summarize, the state has created a governance structure that will include the top leadership of participating state agencies and other stakeholders that can provide the leadership required to develop a high quality plan. However the state did not include sufficient information to understand how community agencies and institutions of high education will participate in governance.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	8

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The state has documented the use of \$48,000,000 from state agencies to be used to achieve the outcomes of the state plan. The state will use existing funds such as Head Start funds to promote professional development through credentialing programs. ESEA funding will be used to implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. MIECHV funding will focus on the early childhood data system. ECES funds will focus on a family support structure. These examples demonstrate that the state is committed to using existing federal and state funds to help them achieve the outcomes in the State Plan. The budget narrative does not have sufficient detail of how the 20 million in funds will be distributed to localities. There is not enough detail to understand if the funds are going to state agencies or local organizations. There is no plan for sustainability that demonstrates that the number of children with high needs in high quality early learning programs will be maintained or expanded. In summary the budget lacks sufficient information to determine how early learning and development program for children with high needs will be improved.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	6
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Early Learning and Development Standards; (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System; (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications; (4) Family engagement strategies; (5) Health promotion practices; and (6) Effective data practices; (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)

Iowa has a QRS that was developed in 2006 for childcare providers and consists of five levels. There is insufficient information included to determine what the requirements are for providers to qualify for higher levels. Only regulated providers can participate however they are not required to participate. The five categories are professional development, health and safety, environment, family and community partnerships and leadership and administration. An Environment Rating scale is used as part of the assessment only level five QRS rating. Child screenings, formative evaluations and adult-child interactions are not part of the existing QRS. Although some standards are in place for early childhood educators, the need for extensive education and support are required to improve qualifications. Health and safety practices have been integrated into the QRS. Family engagement strategies can earn points in the QRS system. There is no integration of early learning and development program data in the QRS. In summary the proposed plans to improve these areas in the grant have insufficient information to determine if the plan will meet the outcomes for a high quality TQRS. For example there is no discussion included on early learning and development standards as part of the tiered quality rating and improvement system.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	10

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

B.2. The QRS provides for participation for all the listed programs except 619 of part B and C of IDEA. This could limit the number of programs that serve children with high needs participating in high quality programs. The state plans to submit legislation to expand the number of home providers required to be regulated by July 2013. The Plan includes expanding the number of center and home based providers, particularly in rural areas to participate in the QRS and to expand the Growth Fund to additional child care centers and homes which provides for the participants to receive funding to develop a business plan that includes a focus on quality improvement. Application to the Growth Fund is a competitive process that includes meeting specific criterion. The second area of the plan is to increase program participation in the QRS and includes activities that will provide increased training and technical assistance. In summary there is insufficient evidence provided to determine if the targets for the number and percentages of Early Learning and Development programs participating in tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system appear reasonable and achievable.

	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)

B3 The applicant includes a plan to address monitoring and rating early learning and development programs but the plan is insufficient because it only requires the use of one assessment. They will revise the QRS to require Environmental Rating Scale(ERS) assessments of all level 4 and 5 programs. There is no statewide system to monitor the quality of early learning programs. There is insufficient information to determine if the tools are valid and reliable. The applicant plans to provide public access to detailed data and licensing history by making the information available via DHS KinderTrack, a child care management system along with the DSH website and include more detailed information on the programs licensing history and ratings achieved. Families may not have access to a website to receive this information and no other ways of informing families are included in the plan. In summary, the plan proposed lacks sufficient detail to determine if the state has a high quality plan for monitoring and rating the quality of early learning and development programs.

	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)

B.4. The state offers achievement bonuses to Level 2-5 programs at each application that range from \$200 to 4,000 based upon the level achieved and the licensed practices. Technical training is also available through Child Care Consultants. A plan for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System include informing families of the providers that participate in QRS, exploring the possibility of increasing the Child Care Assistance reimbursement rate and re-establishing a consumer awareness campaign targeting low income families on the benefits of selecting high quality care. Currently only 18% of the 19,000 children who benefit from CCA programs are served in higher rated programs in the QRS. The applicant does not include baseline data that documents the number and percentage of children with high needs that are in the top levels of the QRS from all the programs nor do they include targets to achieve over the grant years. In summary the plan lacks adequate detail to determine if the state will implement a system to improve the quality of early learning and development programs.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	10

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

B.5. The applicant does not have a validation of tiers of the Iowa's QRS. In their plan, the state will use the Environment Rating Scale(ERS) which is used statewide and has a high level of inter-rated reliability and validity. DHS will be the state agency to contract with an outside entity to complete the ERS assessments. The plan doesn't include information on how the ERS was selected and if this one tool address the diversity of the state's population. One hundred programs with QRS ratings of 2-5 will be selected in the sample validation study. In summary, the state does not include enough detailed information in its plan to determine if progress in children learning will be related to changes in quality ratings.

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)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	15
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

C.2 The state has created a patchwork of assessment practices. Currently the state is implementing a health screening tool which has screened over 80,000 children with High Needs. The state has included some providers in the selection of some assessment tools. However there is no evidence that providers were included in the selection of the GOLD. GOLD is an observation-based assessment for all children, birth to kindergarten and grounded in 38 research-based objectives. The tool is aligned with the Iowa Early Learning Standards, the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten. The State Board of Education has approved program standards to support their goal of getting children ready to succeed in school. Two hundred and ninety of the 320 school Districts use the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards(IQPPS). To measure the quality of adult/child interaction, the applicant is using the CLASS, an observation instrument designed to assess classroom quality and teacher interactions linked to children social, emotional and cognitive development. They have developed a professional development model, CAMPQ to focus on teacher's use of specific instructional interactions as applied to content areas. The variety of assessment tools selected will serve the diverse populations to be served. However only the Shared Vision, an at risk preschool

program is required to use these assessment tools. The applicant states that other programs may participate. There is no information that shows how the plan is working to strengthen the ECE staff to understand and use each type of assessment nor did the applicant address an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing the results to avoid duplication of assessments. The applicant proposes a limited plan to address a comprehensive assessment system that focuses only on professional development for staff. The budgeted amount appears high at 5 million to achieve the goals of the proposed plan. The plan only focuses on training staff on the CLASS assessment tool. In summary, the plan is partially implemented and the quality is medium due to the fact that the focus is on only one tool and the applicant did not address all the criterion.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	9

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

C.3. The applicant has not established a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety or promoting the physical, social and emotional development across levels of its program standards. The applicant focuses on the Child Care Nurse Consultant program as described below instead of addressing the criterion. Iowa has a well developed Child Care Nurse Consultant program which consists of 46 child care nurse consultants that serve child care centers and family child development homes. In 2006 nursing assessments were integrated into the QRS for child-care providers. The services provided by CCNC's include nutrition and physical activity, child development, social and emotional and behavioral health, and oral health. One hundred and five thousand children participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well child care. The applicant plans to use the Child Review Record, an on site nursing assessment, that assists the child's family in accessing health services, securing a medical and dental home and coordinating comprehensive preventive care. If a referral is needed, the family gets connected to Title V MCH agency for care coordination services. The target are not too ambitious, one percent /year. A plan includes the expansion of the CCNC program across the state and a plan to address the evaluation /revision of the nursing assessment tools. The applicant does not address the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported in addressing health standards nor is there a plan to provide training to Early Childhood Educators to provide health services. All the criteria are not met, for example, there is no information related to promoting health eating habits and improving nutrition. There is no progression of standards for ensuring children health and safety or ensuring the health and behavioral screening and follow up occur or promoting children social and emotional development across the levels of its program Standards. In summary, the applicant has focused primary on a plan to expand their CCNC program and did not fully address the needs for early childhood educators for training on health promotion. The CCNC is already a successful program in Iowa and expanding the program may not support a reform agenda to increase the quality of children with high needs. The cost of this program is 25 percent of the entire funding requested which appears high. The plan is a low quality response, partially implemented.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	40	30
<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>D.1. The applicant has many components of a Statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that includes a professional development framework for all four sectors of the early childhood system: health, mental health and nutrition; early learning; family support; and special needs/early intervention, and competencies for all six teaching staff roles along with levels, family support competencies and a family support certificate. The framework is comprehensive and will promote children learning and development and improve outcomes for children. A plan is included to address the unfinished work of developing a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees for both teachers and family support workers. The plan includes several activities such as embedding teaching staff competencies across the professional development system, designing and implementing a comprehensive and progressive credentialing system in ECE and family support, promoting a more culturally competent workforce, align training with TSC's and support the capacity of higher education to train ECE staff and increase access. The budget of two million appears insufficient to cover the costs of all the activities listed in the plan. In summary the state has presented a plan to complete the development of a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frame that is substantially implemented and medium quality because it lack detailed information under its activities.</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	10
<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>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		

Comments on (E)(1)

E.1. The applicant has a literacy assessment that is required of all children entering kindergarten. The state includes a plan to develop and implement a kindergarten assessment. The kindergarten entry assessment will be aligned with the IELS and will be piloted in fall 2013 and implemented statewide in fall of 2014. There is no information on who will participate in the pilot. Funding will come from Title VI ESEA funds. A Task Force will identify an assessment instrument, however there is no plan that includes a process to determine the validity and reliability of the tool. Iowa's statewide longitudinal data system started in 2004-05. Students receiving Part C and early childhood special education services as well as targeted and universal preschool are assigned a student identifier. There is not enough detail in the activities to determine if the budget is adequate. The plan is partially implemented and of medium quality due to insufficient information as described above.

	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)

E.2. The applicant has presented a plan to create a comprehensive early learning data system by expanding and enhancing the Iowa Statewide Longitudinal Data system. The current status of early childhood data is spread across multiple state agencies and the information is not available because of federal and state regulations for privacy and confidentiality. A conceptual plan includes creating a Hub where the user would be able to request information through a web based application through the Hub. The Hub application would seek out the data from the appropriate source and, once retrieved, the meta data would be stored in a repository. The plan includes a two year planning phase and deployment phase. Eight million is budgeted for this plan which is about 25 percent of the total budget request and appears reasonable. The plan is clear, comprehensive and addresses the criterion. It is partially implemented and high quality.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	172

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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 (P)(3)

a.The applicant has not implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. b.The applicant did not earn a score of 70 percent of the maximum points in E(1).

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	No
<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>	
<p>Comments on Absolute Priority</p>	
<p>The applicant does not present a coherent ambitious high quality plan to build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. There is not sufficient information to determine if the state's plan will improve the quality of early learning and development programs. The state said that a comprehensive assessment system was one of its weakest areas but the plan does not address how improvements will improve program quality and outcomes for children with high needs. The focus of building upon its statewide system of health care delivery through the Child Care Nurse Consultants may address children health care needs but is only one component and is budgeted for 25 % of the funds requested. Most of the plans do not include enough detail to determine that all the components of a High Quality plan have been addressed.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # IA-5012

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 9:10 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	10

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)

(A)(1)(a) The applicant does not provide evidence to support a financial investment in Early Learning and Development Programs. An example of this is the reduction of funding for Head Start programming. In 2007, the amount of funding was \$400,000 but that has been reduced to \$0 (zero dollars) from 2008-2011. (A)(1)(b) The applicant does provide information on the increasing number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development programs. However, the applicant states that funding for Head Start and Early Head Start has been eliminated, even as the numbers of children served are expected to increase. In addition, the applicant fails to include detailed information on the number of infants and toddlers who are in the high needs category (Table A1-1). (A)(1)(c) The applicant does describe several groups and policies that are in place to support early learning in the state. For example, the state has supported a voluntary preschool program since 2007. (A)(1)(d) The applicant states that they do not currently have a Comprehensive Assessment System in place, nor does it have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in place. The applicant does present a list of Comprehensive Assessment System elements in Table (A)(1)-7 which is contradictory to the presented narrative.

	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)

(A)(2)(a) The applicant states the need to improve quality and access for training to better prepare children, however, they do not present numbers or percentages within the stated goals, this would be needed to determine the level of ambition and the state's ability to achieve these goals. (A)(2)(b) The applicant does provide data on how the proposed plan will continue to move the state forward and will also serve to complete some of the strategies the state began over 10 years ago. The plan to improve and connect data systems within the state appears to be clear and credible. (A)(2)(c) The applicant proposes a specific rationale to address coaching and training, improve data systems, and to review and revise their Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant has identified these gaps in their current practices and provides a solid rationale for their selection of these areas.

	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)

(A)(3)(a)(1) The applicant provides evidence on having developed an organizational structure over the past 10 years that includes participation from the Early Child Board and describes how they intend to build upon these existing councils. (A)(3)(a)(2) The applicant presents a clearly defined list of roles and responsibilities with other partners such as the Departments of Health, Education, Human Services, and the Child Development Coordinating Council. (A)(3)(a)(3) The applicant does not provide information to address this criterion. (A)(3)(a)(4) The applicant does present information on methods to involve representatives from parent groups in participating agencies or councils. The applicant proposes to meet this criterion through the Interagency Coordinating Council-Part C and stakeholder meetings. (A)(3)(b) The applicant demonstrates a strong commitment to the State Plan from Participating State Agencies as evidenced by the signed letters at the front of the application. (A)(3)(c) The applicant provides letters of support from the community; however, the letters do not appear to span a full range of community partners such as libraries, businesses, family literacy leaders, or postsecondary institutions.

	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)

(A)(4)(b)(1) The applicant presents a budget narrative and budget tables however, there are inconsistencies among the two areas of the application. For example, the applicant requests travel funds in the narrative but does not present this request in the budget Table. (A)(4)(b)(2) The applicant is requesting funds to support training stipends. These funds will only be used for the first year of the grant yet the applicant details training opportunities throughout the life of the grant. (A)(4)(c) The applicant discusses the possibility of pulling funding for professional development frameworks after 2013 and intends to rely solely on the funds from the RTT-ELC grant. The applicant does not provide evidence as to how the professional development frameworks will be financially supported after the grant period.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
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(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)

(B)(1)(a) The applicant states that they do not current have Comprehensive Assessment System or data practices in place so these areas are not relevant to this criteria. However, the state does have a history of health promotion practices and has a TQRIS that includes Family engagement strategies and Early Learning and Development Standards. (B)(1)(b) The applicant has a ladder and menu approach to the TQRIS program that appears to differentiate between levels. This program is aligned with standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and The National Child Development Associate Credential. However, the assessment of child-teacher interaction is not required within the TQRIS and is a critical component to quality early childhood programming. (B)(1)(c) The applicant does not provide specific details on how the State licensing system is connected to the eligible participants in the TQRIS program.

	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)

(B)(2)(a) 1-5 The applicant provides very limited information to address these criterion. The applicant does not provide specific details as to the existing policies or goals to ensure that all publically funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in the TQRIS program. (B)(2)(b) The applicant does discuss expansion of the Growth Fund to include home providers. In addition, the applicant provides target numbers for this expansion that seem reasonable to achieve. (B)(2)(c) The applicant supplies baseline numbers for participation in the TQRIS program, along with percentages, that seem achievable, however the level of ambition in expanding the baseline seems extremely low. The applicant does not provide a narrative explanation for the goal of increasing percentage of participating programs by only 1% each year of the grant cycle.

	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)

(B)(3)(a) The applicant proposes to use the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) in their TQRIS program and to expand the current use of the ERS from only Tier 5 programs to Tier 4 programs as well. However, the validity and reliability of the trainers and the training program is not discussed. (B)(3)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to implement a program to share quality rating and licensing information with parents. However, the methods selected include posting this information at the actual centers and online through website access. The applicant does not present information on the availability of internet access to families. In addition, the applicant proposes to develop this program between July 2012 and December 2013 with no formal, public, roll-out of the program until 2015. This does not seem timely.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	11

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for 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)(a) The applicant has detailed a plan to improve the current relationships with the Child Care Resource and Referral system, state University Extension program, and community partners. The applicant presents a reasonable timeline to address these improvements beginning in January of 2012 and running throughout the life of the grant. (B)(4)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to extend wrap-around care for children with high needs by providing full-day, full-year opportunities. However, there is no evidence presented on the number of children currently receiving wrap-around care or the target number of children expected to participate in such programs. (B)(4)(c)(1) The applicant proposes a plan to increase the number of early childhood programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS program. However, the applicant does not supply information on the number of children currently in top tier programs. It is also a concern that the state identifies levels three-five as the top tiers. The applicant does not supply a rationale for this distinction. It appears that the third level would be the middle tier, not a top tier. (B)(4)(c)(2) The applicant does not address Early Head Start or Head Start programs in the numbers or percentages of participation the TQRIS program. This is inconsistent with early narrative sections of the application.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	10

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

(B)(5)(a) The applicant proposes the continued use of the Environment Rating Scales in their TQRIS program. These measures are highly viewed, and researched, in the field of Early Childhood Education. The sampling method proposed to assess accurate differentiation seems sound. (B)(5)(b) The applicant has not validated the existing TQRIS programs or the individual tiers within the program. There is no data presented to determine whether the tier assignments are related to increasing 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)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	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)

(C)(2)(a) The applicant mentions that the state solely decided which assessment instruments would be used and does not describe any collaborations or discussions with Early Learning and Development Programs in the selection of these instruments. The selected measure seems to be appropriate for the targeted population and addresses many critical areas of child development such as language and literacy, physical well-being, and social and emotional development. (C)(2)(b) The applicant does not present information on working with programs to assist educators in understanding or using the selected assessment instruments. (C)(2)(c) The applicant does present evidence of a plan to align their assessment measure to the state early learning standards and the Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten. The states plan to also include the recently developed Infant/Toddler Quality Program Standards is a strong indicator of their commitment to aligning and integrating Program Standards. (C)(2)(d) The applicant describes a previous study conducted in their state but does not have a plan to continue the training past the cease of funding in April 2012. Past this date, a site facilitator will be in place to support the program, The use of a single site facilitator does not appear to support the goals of the proposed plans.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	10

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;
- (b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;
- (c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and
- (d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--
 - (1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);
 - (2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and
 - (3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

(C)(3)(a) The applicant does not fully address this criterion. The applicant does provide evidence on establishing standards based on the physical health needs of children but does not discuss other areas in the criterion such as social and emotional development. (C)(3)(b) The applicant does not discuss a plan to increase the number of trained early childhood educators. The applicant does mention that their Child Care Nurse Consultants spent 1,753 hours training early childhood providers on health and safety issues in 2010 but there is no discussion on how the CCNC program will move forward over the grant cycle. (C)(3)(c) The applicant does provide evidence of promoting healthy eating habits and expanding physical activity. For example, the applicant proposes to work on policies to reduce television viewing and establish a minimum number of minutes of physical activity for young children on a daily basis. The applicant intends to work with several agencies to develop these guidelines, including early childhood providers and the state Department of Public Health. These collaborations should ensure successful completion of this task. (C)(3)(d) The applicant proposes a plan to continue working relationships with Child Care Nurse Consultants through the nursing assessment program. (C)(3)(1) The applicant does not discuss a plan to align their screening measures with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit. (C)(3)(3)The applicant does not provide information on the number of children who are up to date in the well-child care schedule.

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.	40	25

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)
(D)(1) The budget presented for the tasks identified in this criterion appears limited. The applicant intends to implement a high quality plan over 4 different work plans. The applicant does not provide information on how the funds will be divided or utilized within each of these plans. (D)(1)(a) The applicant describes a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that includes health, early learning, family support, and special education/early intervention components. This plan has been in place since 2009. (D)(1)(b) The applicant states that teaching levels are in place and are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The specific details of the levels, however, are not provided. (D)(1)(c) The applicant has a history of working with two postsecondary institutions in aligning the professional development opportunities with the Competency Frameworks. These organizations provide opportunities for early childhood educators to build upon their knowledge. However, there are no letters of support provided from these institutions which is cause for concern on the ability for the tasks to be attained.

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	10

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

(E)(1) The applicant does not provide evidence that funding for this criterion is appropriate. The applicant does not supply the numbers of pilot sites or the number of teachers to be trained during this program. This information is needed in order to assess the ability to achieve this goal. (E)(1)(a) The applicant has a plan to implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is aligned with the early learning guidelines and the Common Core. (E)(1)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The validity, reliability, and appropriateness cannot be determined as the plan does not currently exist. However, the applicant does present a plan to include national experts and the state Department of Education in the selection of assessment instruments that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. (E)(1)(c) The applicant proposes a plan to begin implementation of their Kindergarten Entry Assessment by the fall of 2014. (E)(1)(d) The applicant intends to report data from the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System beginning in the winter of 2015. (E)(1)(e) The applicant presents a plan to utilize Title VI ESEA funds to support the development and implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment plan. The applicant does not present this information until Fiscal Year 2015 in the budget table. The lack of available funding for the first three years of the grant does not support the work identified as happening during the first three years of the grant.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

(E)(2)(a) The applicant does state that they will assess whether they meet the requirements of this criteria as the program progresses. There is evidence that the applicant will address all Essential Data Elements by developing a business plan to meet the requirements of this criterion. (E)(2)(b) The applicant states they have been attempting since 1998 to create a uniformed data collection by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs. The applicant plans to continue this work through the life of the RTT ELC award. (E)(2)(c) The applicant presents data sharing agreements between the Departments of Human Services and Education and proposes the development of a central system for Common Education Data Standards to be stored (a HUB system). (E)(2)(d) The applicant proposes a plan to assess the current use of programs and the characteristics of the existing

workforce. The plan to collect baseline data is divided over three areas: Children with High Needs, Early Learning and Development Programs, and Early Childhood Educators. (E)(2)(e) The applicant states that they will comply with Federal laws such as HIPPA and FERPA.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	157

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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>(a) The applicant does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment implemented to date. (b) The applicant has received a score of 50 percent of the maximum points for criteria (E)(1).</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	No
<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 applicant does 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 applicant does not involve early childhood providers or Early Learning and Development Programs in the decisions for selection of assessment instruments to be used. The lack of collaboration in an area that is expected to impact all early childhood providers and all children being served in the state limits the actual fidelity to the use of any selected measure. In addition, the applicant does not present information on supplying any training with programs to assist educators in understanding or using the selected assessment instruments. The applicant presents limited information on the specifics as to how they plan to address and create a Great Early Childhood Education Workforce. The applicant briefly describes collaborations with local postsecondary institutions but does not describe the details or level of involvement of these institutions. It is unclear if the postsecondary institutions will provide credit bearing classes, non-credit course work, etc. It is also unclear if the early childhood educators will receive financial assistance to expand their knowledge in early childhood development and education. The applicant does not provide evidence that funding for this criterion is appropriately determined. The applicant omits the numbers of pilot sites and the number of teachers expected to be trained during this program. This information is needed in order to assess the ability to achieve this goal and to meet the overall plan to increase the number of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p>	

