



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KY-5014

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:12 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	14

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state's past commitment to early learning and development is demonstrated by the development of legislation designed to improve both quality and accessibility of Early Learning and Development Programs. For example, the state implemented a wide-ranging school reform act in 1999 that included the establishment of state-funding for pre-K classrooms and family resource centers for each school district. Subsequent legislation has addressed maternal and child health, early childhood mental health, increase in access to the child care subsidy, creation of a framework for professional development for caregivers and teachers, implementation of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, and establishment of local Community Early Childhood Councils. These initiatives provide important building blocks for an integrated system designed to close readiness gaps between Children with High Needs and their peers. However, state funding for Early Education and Development initiatives decreased in recent years. For example, funding for state-funded preschool programs is over \$3 million less than it was three years and state match to CCDF has declined almost \$8 million since 2007. The application does not indicate if state match for CCDF was met. Other smaller types of investments have shown slight increases, but the overall state investment has dropped over \$4 million since 2007. During 2008 and 2009 total state investments dropped substantially to around \$1 million total. The numbers of Children with High Needs participating in Learning and Development programs increased slightly between 2007 and 2010 despite a drop in funding. This increase was mainly due to a small expansion in the number of Children with High Needs participating in state-funded preschool. More recently, the Governor established a Task Force on Early Childhood Development and education in 2009, and the work of that collaborative organization in identifying gaps and needs was used to develop the proposal goals. The state developed a comprehensive set of Early Learning and Development Standards that address birth through four years of age and all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The standards are aligned to the state's K-12 Program of Study, Head Start Outcomes, and the common core standards; however, it is not clear how these standards are implemented in Early Learning and Development Programs because there currently is no Kindergarten Entry Assessment, and the state's Comprehensive Assessment System is not fully integrated across all program types. For example, screening measures, formative assessments and measures of the quality of Adult-Child Interactions are not addressed at all in the TQRIS or in licensing requirements. Although

state-funded pre-K, Head Start and IDEA programs all include screening, formative assessment and measures of environmental quality, only Head Start includes a measure of the quality of adult-child interactions. The proposal notes that the state education department is in the process of developing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness. Although not universal, elements of high-quality health promotion practices are well represented in all types of Early Learning and Development Programs. Elements of family engagement, however, are primarily focused on linking families to community services except in Head Start programs and IDEA, where parent engagement strategies are more developed. State licensing and CCDF programs which serve the largest numbers of Children with High Needs require only one annual activity involving parent for family participation and do not specify any parent education, family literacy services, two-way communication, or transitional support as children move to kindergarten. The proposal identifies state progress toward an effective data system, but there is no current unified system that allows easy access for stakeholders and for the purpose of identifying gaps and progress. Many, but not all, of the essential data elements are collected, but are not easily accessible to all stakeholders. Also problematic is the evidence that neither data on program structure and quality nor educator demographic data are routinely tracked. While the narrative explains that a state-wide data collaborative is under development and will include early childhood data, the explanation does not specify that essential Early Childhood Data Elements are included in this database. The application describes a very well developed framework for professional development for Early Childhood Educators. The framework coordinates and articulates a wide variety of types of credentials. The proposal also documents a network of two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and universities that provide training in the network. In addition training is available through child care resource and referral agencies and five Early Childhood regional Training Centers that are state-funded. However, the numbers of educators receiving credentials from the community agencies is not provided. The framework document also specifies a plan for state-funded financial support to aid access to the training. However, the proposal does not clearly explain how the framework is implemented. For example, although the state provides a Commonwealth Credential that is articulated with the first half of the nationally recognized CDA credential, the minimum requirement for Early Education staff is not identified. The general level of education required or to be required for Early Learning and Development Program staff and how that level will improve is not clear because the number of Early Childhood Educators with CDA credentials and the number with Associates of Applied Science degrees are not estimated.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

The reform ambitiously addresses most major gaps identified in the data provided in (A) (1). For example, the state proposes a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, improved emphasis on family engagement, improved professional development, a better and more Comprehensive Assessment System, updated Program Standards and a coordinated data collection system. The ambitious reform plan is supported by using many elements that are partially in place. For example, the plan proposes improvement and updating of existing Program Standards, revision of an existing TQRIS and expansion of the TQRIS to all programs receiving public support, revision of the professional development framework, improvement of the financial incentives for professional development and program improvement; further development of an existing assessment framework to achieve a Comprehensive Assessment System, and building upon the beginnings of a statewide data system to effectively serve the needs of early childhood program evaluation and accountability. Building on the existing foundation makes the ambitious plan more achievable. The plan also ambitiously selects seven of the eight selection criteria in the three Focused Investment Areas. The proposal notes the importance and interconnectedness of all the selection criteria in the Focused Investment Areas. The proposal does not address selection criteria (C)(3) (health, behavioral, and development needs) because the data provided in Section (A)(1) demonstrates this is a current area of strength. The plan also addresses the need to increase access of Children with High Needs to programs of higher quality. This access is achieved by improvement of existing programs that serve these children through improved TQRIS that will be required of all publicly funded programs. Quality and accountability of programs serving Children with High Needs also is addressed with a proposed common set of Comprehensive Assessments, development of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment and development of a comprehensive data system. Improved staff professional development and a focus on family engagement also will contribute to improved quality of programs. The application explains why each element of the reform plan is crucial to the overall goal of improving readiness of Children with High Needs; however, specifics are not always provided. For example, the application mentions refreshing the Early Learning and Development Standards, but does not explain what aspects of these standards will be addressed.

	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)

A governance structure promoting strong collaboration that makes use of existing offices and organizations is proposed. An established Early Childhood Advisory Council serves as the governing board of directors for the Lead Agency (Office of Early Childhood), which is part of the governor's office. This council includes good representation of major stakeholders, which is a strength in the proposal. While the application indicates leaders of the Participating State Agencies have a history of collaboration, no specific examples are provided of how this collaboration has been managed or effected. Strong commitment to implement the plan is provided by the Lead Agency and Participating State Agencies all providing the model Memorandum of Understanding signed by their lead officer. A detailed agency scope of work is provided for the Lead Agency and the three Participating State Agencies. The scope-of-work documents address each of the projects in the proposed plan and clearly delineate the expectations for each agency. Scope-of-work documents demonstrate collaborative responsibilities for development of project aspects and communicate the expectation that jointly developed plans will be implemented by the appropriate agency. A plan for developing wide participation is provided through the revitalization of local Community Early Childhood Councils. The proposal notes that local participation is key to buy-in and to the sustainability of project elements; however, a large proportion of counties currently do not have a functioning Community Early Childhood Council, and the time line indicates fully functioning councils throughout all counties

will not be in place until approximately half way through the project. Some funding already is in place to support the work of the local Community Early Childhood Councils, and letters of support are provided from organizations that are (or potentially are) involved in the Community Early Childhood Councils. The time line for the revitalization is provided in great detail, but how these councils will participate in the development of the specific reform plan elements is unclear. Letters of support from a wide variety of potential stakeholders are provided. These stakeholders represent most aspects of the community listed in the proposal guidelines and clearly communicate a solid base of support for the work to be done.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	9

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 clearly explains how existing funds will be leveraged for this project. For example, CCDF quality set asides are proposed to fund portions of the new TQRIS. Existing allocations within the state department of education will be used to develop and implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Existing Tobacco Settlement funds will be used to cover many of the on-going expenses related to other aspects the project, and the state proposes to use RTT-ELC funds primarily for building infrastructure. This is an effective and efficient way to address sustainability for the new initiatives; however, when RTT-ELC funds are to be used for ongoing expenses, the proposal states that state appropriations will be sought to cover those costs at the end of the grant period. This plan for developing state appropriations is not discussed, nor is the ground work for developing those appropriations described. For example the largest new project is the implementation of the TQRIS with paid incentives for improvement. Approximately 66% (over \$40 million) of the requested RTT-ELC funds are to be used for this initiative. According to the application narrative, there will be a large shortfall in the cost of the TQRIS initiative, which is addressed only by the statement that appropriations will be sought, and commitments have been made by Participating Agencies to find the funds. No examples of potential sources of funds are provided. Except for the expansion of the TQRIS, most ongoing costs are covered by the state through existing allocations or Tobacco Settlement funds. The proposal indicates that all the project activities are planned within their respective agencies and will be implemented with or without the RTT-ELC funds. The TQRIS is the major initiative to be funded by RTT-ELC funding, and the sustainability of that initiative after the project period is not clearly addressed. The application provides detailed information about how funds (RTT-ELC and funds from other sources) will be used for project activities. Proposal developers provide good information about how estimates were developed and which professionals were consulted to assist with the budget development. In most instances, the amounts allocated are reasonable for the activities described in the budget narratives. One exception is the proposed allocations to the Community Early Childhood Councils. The budgets for training and development for the Councils and for equipment and supplies are adequate and the estimates well-documented; however, an average of \$30K per year per council is a small amount to implement the wide range of activities assigned to these groups (grants for implementing Comprehensive Assessments, professional development, and parent engagement strategies). Although Comprehensive Assessment is discussed, budget lines are only provided for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment and for the environmental and adult/child interaction measures (part of the TQRIS). Child assessments (screening & formative) do not have a dedicated budget. The narrative assigns responsibility for the Comprehensive Assessment System to the state Department of Education, but budget allocations for that Participating State Agency only address costs related to Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	7

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)

An existing TQRIS is in place that addresses several, but not all, of the required criteria. Criteria currently include Early Learning and Development Standards, staff/child ratios, group size, environmental quality, and curriculum; Early Childhood Educator qualifications; some aspects of family engagement and some other factors including regulatory compliance. The elements missing in the current TQRIS (Comprehensive Assessment System, health promotion practices and effective data practices) are included in the plan presented for reform. Additionally, the goals for the improved TQRIS include revision and strengthening of the state's Early Childhood Standards and improvement of Early Childhood Educator qualifications. The existing plan is voluntary and not tied to licensing, but the plan shows intent to tie the new TQRIS to licensing. The narrative also indicates that the existing plan, uses well-established valid and reliable instruments (ECERS, ITERS, SACERS & FDCERS) to measure environmental quality; however, it also indicates that the existing TQRIS, while clearly measurable, does not differentiate levels of program quality. A strength of the proposal is the election of choices from the Focused Investment Areas that address identified weaknesses in the TQRIS. The proposal indicates that the new TQRIS will be tied to licensing, but it does not clarify which, if any, of the improvements will be required for programs serving Children with High Needs. For example, the narrative explains that the new Tier 1 will be licensing and that the current STAR 1 level will become Tier 2. The application does not explain whether Tier 1 or Tier 2 will be required of programs serving CCDF or other Children with High Needs, and it does not discuss how licensing requirements may be improved for programs serving these children. The proposal outlines a reasonable implementation plan for how the new Program Standards and Tiers will be developed through a small work group of key stakeholders, but it does not identify or describe a clear plan to improve the ability of the new TQRIS to differentiate program quality. Some additional weakness of the plan include the fact that Head Start programs are not identified as using Early Learning and Development Standards, yet all Head Start Programs are required to use the nationally recognized Head Start Program Performance Standards.

	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)

The application addresses program implementation of the proposed TQRIS by describing time lines and key activities in a reasonable way. All of the categories of Early Learning and Development Program types are addressed. The time line does not specify a time period for piloting TQRIS rating documents and establishing inter-rater reliability. There is a plan to improve programs funded by IDEA Part C, even though these infant and toddler programs are not center-based. The application explains that programs funded by IDEA Part B and Title I of ESEA are part of the state-funded preschool programs and are, therefore, fully included in the plan. The narrative describes an efficient plan for program monitoring that will include only the items that each category does not meet under its current regulation. For example, if the TQRIS requirement for parent engagement is the same as the Head Start Program Review requirement, the Head Start programs will not be rated on that factor. This plan will streamline the process for rating programs, but require a large investment to articulate the various types of existing program standards. Ambitious, achievable targets are set for program participation. The difficulty lies in how program participation is defined. The project proposes to define Tier 1 of the revised TQRIS as compliance with licensing. Thus any program that is licensed will be awarded at least a Tier 1 designation and become a participant in the system. It is not clear how this plan will result in any improved quality. In the existing system, STAR 1 (first tier) is awarded for achievement of quality measures beyond licensing compliance. The new system assigns this same rating for centers that only meet basic licensing compliance with no additional quality parameters met. It is not clear how renaming the status quo leads to higher quality. The narrative recognizes that programs that already have standards higher than licensing (Head Start and state-funded preschool) will likely enter the system at higher tiers, depending on how those standards are articulated with the TQRIS. No policy is described to address how Early Learning and Development Programs that meet the minimum (licensing) standards and, therefore, participate in the TQRIS will be encouraged to make improvements. Plans are provided for developing models that improve quality through collaboration between state-funded pre-K and private centers. Additional plans propose to develop local support through United Way and other philanthropies. No plan is presented for encouraging existing programs of high quality to serve more Children with High Needs.

	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 existing TQRIS rating system uses established valid and reliable measures of classroom environment. State-funded pre-K and licensed providers participating in STARS are monitored with the ECERS family of assessments, using the version appropriate for the type of setting and age of child. Head Start is monitored using the national Head Start system and is piloting use of a valid and reliable measure of adult-child interaction (CLASS). The existing system provides training related to the measures used both to providers and stakeholders, as well as to the consultants who do the rating and monitoring. The current system includes posting results on a website. There are weaknesses in the current system such as voluntary participation and rating of programs being done as a sample, rather than individually. For example, random selection of monitoring for state-funded preschool and licensed child care is satisfactory for overall program evaluation, but not sufficient for insuring that all children have access to high quality programs. Only 30% of classrooms receive on-site monitoring every 5 years. Additionally, the narrative is unclear about whether the quality results currently posted include all categories of care such as state-funded Pre-K (which includes Title I ESEA and IDEA Part B), Head Start and all licensed

child care. No clear discussion is provided for how elements other than classroom environment are rated and monitored. For example, no system for checking and communicating teacher qualifications is described for the current system. Also, no system is described for relating how child assessments are implemented or how those data are used or communicated. Additionally, the current system for posting only is accessible to consumers who have access to a computer and the internet, even though the application explains how many areas of the state have very high poverty rates and limited access. The proposed plan has strengths including reconsideration of the existing measures, based on a currently on-going external evaluation of the existing system. The proposed plan will continue to use valid and reliable measures and may include the use of a valid and reliable measure of adult-child interaction (CLASS), as well as valid and reliable measures of classroom environment. The new plan includes a training plan for raters and evaluators, but this training plan is not well-documented, and the time line for implementation does not make clear that training will be provided to establish inter-rater reliability for new measures. The proposed plan describes development of a system to cross-reference existing required measures with the new measures in order to streamline monitoring, which will be important when many more providers are part of the TORIS system. Discussion of the proposed plan does not address all the weaknesses in the existing plan. For example, there is no discussion of changing the frequency of monitoring for state-funded pre-K classrooms or for making that rating and monitoring system universal, rather than a random sample. There is not any discussion of how the new plan will address rating and monitoring of all TORIS elements including educator qualifications, child assessment and use of child level data to improve instruction or program delivery. There is a plan to improve the dissemination of information about the quality of programs. The proposed project activities are focused on improving online access. Other means of dissemination are left to the discretion of local communities. For example, there is no proposed policy initiative to require centers to post information about their quality rating or to include that information on any printed materials they develop. The proposed plan does not discuss making licensing rating history or health/safety violations more widely available to the public.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	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 improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

The current system includes a system of incentives for participation and achievement within the now voluntary TORIS. The current TORIS involves only licensed child care (not Head Start or state-funded pre-K). The current system of incentives is graduated giving higher dollar amounts for centers that serve higher percentages of Children with High Needs and that achieve Tiers 3 and 4 (higher levels) of the existing TORIS. The proposed plan for incentives does not discuss how the existing incentive payment structure will be revised. The existing plan does not address fundamental differences between state-funded pre-K and Head Start on the one hand and licensed child care centers that receive only vouchers on the other hand. State-funded pre-K and Head Start already receive public funds that permit them to attain high standards. The public funding support these categories of Early Learning and Development Programs currently receive is relatively stable and includes built in funding for technical assistance and monitoring to meet established quality criteria measured by one or another established valid and reliable measure. Licensed child care, on the other hand, receives public support only through vouchers and relatively minimal TA delivered through Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Usually this technical assistance only addresses meeting licensing or minimum standards. The income to most licensed child care is less stable and totally dependent on the mix of tuition from privately paying parents and public voucher/reimbursement rates. Because of the stable funding and strong system of existing TA support, most state-funded pre-K and Head Start classrooms are likely to come in to the TORIS system in the higher levels. The narrative notes that these two categories of Early Learning and Development Programs are likely to be brought into the new required TORIS at higher levels than licensed child care. The key to improving accessibility of High Quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs is to improve the quality of licensed child care that does not participate in the existing TORIS (STARS) or is at the lower levels of the existing system (STARS). The proposed plan does not clearly target incentives and services to the lower quality levels. The proposed plan will not provide cash incentives for Head Start and state-funded pre-K until they achieve the last two tiers (4 & 5); however, most of these programs are likely to enter the plan with a Tier 4 designation. Using the plan proposed, programs that come into the system with higher ratings (state-funded pre-K and Head Start) will receive most of the incentive dollars. They already serve Children with High Needs with 100% of their

available spaces and they already have achieved quality indicators sufficient to meet the existing regulations for quality that highly exceed licensing requirements. No mention is made of how reimbursement rates for CCDF will be leveraged to serve as incentives for licensed child care to move upward in the tiers or how the current financial incentives will be modified to encourage upward movement. The existing financial incentives for reaching STAR Level 3 (above the midpoint) range between additional reimbursements of \$132-192 per child per annum. It is not clear that this level of increase is enough to sustain quality indicators within the existing TQRIS system such as improved benefits and salary increases that should accompany improved educator credentials. For example, in order to move from a STAR 2 to a STAR 3, paid leave for employees is required and the director must have a CDA credential. The existing plan and the proposed plan do leverage funds to provide scholarships for improving educator credentials, but it is not clear that financial incentives will be adequate to support reasonable salary increases for educators with improved credentials and increased costs for books and materials to implement higher quality curriculum. Additionally, careful examination of evidence provided reveals that at the end of Year 4 only about 450 additional programs are projected to be at levels 3-5 of the TQRIS. This estimate subtracts the existing state-funded pre-K and Head Start programs that currently meet nationally recognized valid and reliable quality indicators and are projected to enter the system in Year 2 already at Tier 3 or above. This net increase in programs that move from lower tiers to higher tiers represents an increase of about 10% of the total number of programs. Assuming these programs serve average numbers of Children with High Needs approximately 10% more Children with High Needs would potentially be served in programs that reach above average quality Tiers. The proposed plan does not discuss expansion of programs from part-day to full day or part year to full year. It is not clear whether all current state-funded pre-K and Head Start programs are full time and full year.

	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)

Some elements of a High Quality Plan for TQRIS evaluation are provided. For example, a contract with an outside evaluator is proposed. However, at the time the proposal was written, the responsible Participating Agency was not identified. The plan for evaluation is not clearly defined, and is left for further planning and development. Because the details are not provided it is impossible to judge whether the plan is likely to successfully validate differentiation. Also, the application states that differentiation of quality by tiers in the existing STARS was addressed in a previous study and will be addressed when the new system is evaluated; however, there is not discussion about the method used or to be used or whether differentiation was confirmed in the previous evaluation. Additionally, special populations such as children with disabilities and English learners, within the total group of Children with High Needs are not specified as being examined for program impact. The proposed plan provides a time line and key milestones for development of an evaluation plan.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(1)

Some elements of (C)(1) have been implemented by some categories of Early Learning and Development Programs. For example, the state has a set of Early Learning and Development Standards that have been updated periodically; documents have been developed for parents and providers that explain the standards; and professional development also has been developed to improve understanding and use of the standards. The current implementation of (C) (1) has some weaknesses. For example, the proposal does not make clear if any of the initiatives developed to explain the standards to parents and to train providers to implement the standards are still in operation, although documents developed previously are still distributed to parents and providers. One professional development effort related to understanding standards that is in operation only addresses the state-funded pre-K category, but it is not clear which initiatives currently are in place for other categories of Early Learning and Development Programs. In the application, the state provided summaries and overviews of the standards, but did not provide an actual copy of the standards, themselves. The overviews indicate the standards address all Essential Domains of School Readiness, except it is not clear that adaptive motor development for children with special needs is addressed. Although the overview documents explain the format of the standards, which indicates a quality approach including a standard statement, benchmarks of developmental levels, a developmental continuum, and example behaviors, actual examples of this approach are not provided in the narrative or appendices. The overview documents discuss guiding principles for the standards that indicate the standards are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate. The overview documents show clearly how the categories and items in Birth-Three standards are linked to the Three-Four year old standards. Although the narrative states that the Early Childhood Standards have been aligned to the K-3 course of study and common core standards in language/literacy and math, examples of this alignment are not provided. The proposed plan addresses many of the challenges in the current implementation and integration of Early Learning and Development Standards. For example the proposed project will update the standards to include alignment to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and will formally adopt the alignment of the Early Learning and Development Standards to K-12 Core Academic Standards. The plan also will update the support documents to include information about approaches to learning, one of the Essential Domains of School Readiness that has been incorporated into Early Learning and Development Standards since the last revision of support documents. Additionally, plans for incorporating the Early Learning and Development Standards into the revised TQRIS program standards, the proposed Comprehensive Assessment System and the proposed Kindergarten Entry Assessment are discussed in detail that includes key activities, time lines, subgroups representative of Participating State Agencies responsible. Equally detailed plans also are presented to renew professional development efforts related to understanding and using standards, as well to incorporate standards revisions into the competency framework for the professional development lattice.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	15

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)

This state has an existing framework for comprehensive assessments. The narrative clearly describes this framework as including screening/diagnostic measures and formative assessment processes. The application does not make clear whether Measures of Environmental Quality are included as part of the comprehensive system, and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions are not mentioned in the description of the current framework. Approaches to formative assessment are described and appropriately include data collected through performance (authentic assessment), as well as observation, interview, children's work samples and direct testing. The application did not sufficiently explain how the approaches actually are implemented in the choice and range of assessments recommended. The proposed project addresses duplication of assessments for Children of High Need served by multiple programs, but does not clearly explain how this will be accomplished. The proposal discusses plans to streamline the existing assessment guide by removing assessments that are not used, while still offering providers and communities choices. How this streamlining will address the issue of multiple assessments of children served in multiple programs is not clear. For example, if a child is served by more than one part-time or part-year program, the child could potentially be exposed to direct testing on the same instrument multiple times. The reform plan also proposes some integration of the assessment system into the new TQRIS, but it does not specify the degree to which child assessments will be required by all program types, nor does the proposed reform explain how Measures of Environmental Quality and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions will be included in the new assessment system. A strong plan for helping Early Childhood Educators learn how to implement and use assessments is proposed. The proposal plans to integrate training about assessments into the professional development framework. Key activities, assignment of responsible State Participating Agency, and appropriate time lines are provided.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	6

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(4)

The state has several existing initiatives that address family engagement. Within the public school system, schools that serve 20% or more Children with High Needs, Family Resource Youth Service Centers are available. Family engagement is addressed within the existing TQRIS and in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (exiting Early Childhood professional development framework). Several not-for-profit groups provide some services in local communities. The state also has a statewide family visitation program funded through IDEA Part C focused on prenatal, infant screening, and well-baby services that also includes a parent engagement component. Local Community Early Childhood Councils provide training to child care providers on promoting family engagement. These existing initiatives are somewhat fragmented and not equally available to all communities or to all categories of Early Learning and Development Programs. The intensity of on-going support, depth of training, and frequency of delivery is not made clear. There is much focus on helping parents find and use existing community services within the state-wide system of Family Resource Youth Service Centers, but other aspects of family engagement are not as fully described when current initiatives are discussed. The exiting TQRIS does provide a progression of family engagement standards, but these standards are based simply on the increasing numbers of annual activities (1-4). The proposed plan for improvement of family engagement addresses leveraging support from existing programs and building community coalitions. Examples of community groups are described. A listing of key activities with time lines and Participating Agency responsible is provided. The plan also addresses improvements in the family engagement requirements in the TQRIS, but does not mention examples of how the TQRIS may be improved in this area. The family engagement plan does not provide sufficient detail. For example, no baseline data with estimates of numbers of parents and providers receiving workshops in parent engagement is provided, nor are projections of future services. Although the application indicates that best practices will be shared with community groups, no examples of topics or types of services are included.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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 in place a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that provides a common statewide progression of early childhood credentials and degrees. The documents provided represent strong evidence that the indicators for this criterion are fully addressed. The progression begins in high school child development courses and continues through college and university degrees. Also included is a director's credential requiring appropriate college courses and a separate progression of credentials for those who provide professional development to child care providers. Post secondary 4-year and 2-year institutions have been involved in developing articulation plans that allow work done at a lower level to be applied toward work at a higher level. For example the Commonwealth Credential (lowest level of credentialing) can be credited toward the first 60 hours of the CDA (Child Development Associate) credential, which is the next level up. Articulation agreements allow the Commonwealth Credential to be converted to a 3 hour college course. The CDA Credential can be converted to 9 hours of college credit. Articulation has been developed on the basis alignment of courses of study for the various levels of credential/degrees. The improvements and planned revisions encompass refining the system to reflect proposed changes to TQRIS, differentiating the "Core Content" to reflect career progression and developing communication tools to help Early Childhood Educators better understand and access the system. A plan that includes key activities, milestones, time lines and responsible Participation State Agencies is presented.

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

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

- (a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
- (b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;
- (c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and
- (d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--
 - (1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
 - (2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

The existing system for delivery of professional development has many strengths that promote access. These strengths include participation of almost 30 post secondary institutions with good geographical coverage of the state and provision of professional career counselors through the network of community colleges. These counselors help potential students develop a professional growth plan that includes both degree and non-degree programs. The professional development Counselors also serve as point of entry to the process of applying for Early Childhood Development Scholarships, which are available to all categories of providers and to the additional state grants for expenses and meeting milestones. The Early Childhood Scholarship system also assists Early Childhood Educators in leveraging other sources of funding for education including Pell Grants, state funding based on need, and state scholarships related to excellence. Data regarding Early Childhood Educators' professional development are collected in the state, although not in an easily accessed central location. Data related to baseline numbers of credentials and projected increases in numbers of each type of credential are presented; however, estimates of the number of Early Childhood Educators with the CDA Credential are not provided as baseline or prediction. Although the state does not award the CDA Credential, this credential is a key part of the state's career progression and it is important to know how Early Childhood Learning and Development Programs make use of this form of professional development. Promotion of this credential can increase access to 2 year degrees, particularly since the existing career lattice has developed strong articulation between the state competency credential and the CDA and between the CDA and college-related programs. The application indicates scholarship students who use funds to pay for courses at four-year institutions primarily are participating in non-degree programs, and there is not additional evidence of a plan to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators who participate in and earn 4-year degrees. For example in Table (D)(2)(d)(2), it is not clear whether the career lattice addresses earning either a 2-year degree or a 4-year degree. Thus, it is not clear that the current credentialing system will include raising the educational level of Early Childhood Educators beyond the level of the CDA. Additionally, other financial incentives such as wage supplements and tiered reimbursement rates are not discussed in the description of the existing system. The proposal presents strong plans for improving access through better collaboration and for improving the database related to provider professional development. For example, access through better collaboration of existing venues coordinated by a new Center for Professional Development within the Governors Office. The establishment of year-long leadership institutes, organized through the Center for Professional Development are designed to provide training related to the Early Childhood Standards in a setting that also promotes collaboration and understanding across categories of Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators. Also proposed is the development of a more unified and easily accessible database related to professional development. The plans for the institution of the Center for Professional Development; the implementation of community professional learning centers; and the improvement in the database are presented in detail that includes key activities, time lines and Participating State Agencies responsible. The plan also mentions the development of online training and requiring participation in the data system of all programs as part of the licensing requirement. No detailed plans for either of these initiatives are provided. The plan also does not provide any discussion of how to promote retention and desire for higher levels of certification through tiered reimbursement rates, wage supplements, or other financial or management incentives.

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	16
<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>		

(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 has made much progress toward developing and understanding of the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry. Definitions and descriptions of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment have been developed that are congruent with the requirements of this funding initiative, including validity and reliability, appropriate for target populations including English learners and children with disabilities; alignment with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covering all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The state department of education will have responsibility for this incentive. Requests for information already have been sent to vendors and requests for proposals will be issued late in 2011. The legislative process needed to require state-wide implementation of the common assessment will commence in Spring 2012. Training will begin in 2012 and the assessment will be implemented statewide in the fall of 2012. Child level data will be housed in the State Longitudinal Data System (Infinite Campus). One time only costs such as training during the grant period and printing revised assessment guides will be covered by RTT-ELC funds, but the bulk of the cost for the implementation on ongoing assessment and data maintenance will be covered by the state department of education through its annual appropriation. Key activities are outlined in detail with responsibility for each Participating State Agency identified and with time lines provided.

	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 the beginnings of an effective Early Childhood data system. Prior to this grant competition, the state had begun an Early Childhood Data Warehouse initiative slated to become part of the existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The existing system currently integrates K-12 and post secondary data at the child and program level. The existing system also tracks teacher education and licenses. This existing system has a board of governors with data oversight responsibility. The legislation that established the existing system requires compliance with all federal, state, and local privacy laws. As part of previous work to develop the Early Childhood Data Warehouse and link it to the existing system, stakeholders have adopted fundamentals that are congruent with most of the components of the Essential Data Elements addressed in this funding initiative. Many of the data points required by this criterion already are collected in the state, but are not compiled in a single, easily accessible system. One section of the state has developed a system that does allow flexible access to Early Childhood data that actually can be used for formative purposes. The application clearly communicates the state's understanding of the importance of such a system for the entire state. The application reflects recognition that difficulties with the existing system include old data structures that make it difficult to add new children and the fact data are entered into the system too late to be efficiently used by teachers and programs. The planned improvements to the system include use of all Essential Data Elements and Common Educational Data Standards, which already are used in the existing K-12/post secondary system. The description of the plan also includes various levels of data access that protect privacy while still allowing access to data for curriculum and program planning as well as evaluation. The plan includes a list of key activities with time lines for completion. The roles and responsibilities of the Participating State Agencies are explained.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	188

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	6
<p>Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--</p> <p>(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (P)(2)		
<p>The existing system of regulation and inspection covers all center-based family providers that serve four or more children for a fee. Friends, family and neighbor care that is paid CCDF funds may have as many as three unrelated children without being regulated. The application provides no discussion of changing the system so that providers serving two or more unrelated children come under the licensing umbrella. This issue is problematic because it potentially leaves many Children With High Needs in out of home care that may not even meet basic health and safety standards and that has no strong incentive to improve quality. Currently unregulated providers do not participate in the existing TQRIS. The plans for the new TQRIS will invite participation by these types of programs, but will not require these types of programs to participate.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<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)		
Application was scored at 70% or higher on criterion (E)(1).		

Absolute Priority

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

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 application addresses all components of a system that will result in improving the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. For example the plan includes wide participation in a TQRIS, a Kindergarten Entry Assessment aligned to a good set of program standards, improved data collection and access that will allow for better use of data to inform instruction. If the plan presented is implemented, the state will have dramatically improved the opportunities for Children with High Needs to succeed in school. The state proposes to build on existing strengths, such as an established TQRIS and state funding for pre-K classrooms. Investment RTT-ELC funds is planned for areas of need such as more extensive participation in the TQRIS. The plan includes collaboration among Participating State Agencies and community organizations.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KY-5014

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:55 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, 20.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state has documented past commitment to developing quality systems for early learning and development and recognizes the areas of continuing need. First, the commitment to early education is documented by the state's continuous fiscal investments in the state-funded preschools, even during difficult economic periods. (1)From 2007-2009 increases in funding are apparent across funding streams (Table A1) with an infusion of 25% of the funds from the Tobacco settlement allocated to support state preschools. While an overall decline of 23% is noted in total funding for early learning and development, the state's continuing commitment to state preschools is documented by only a 4% decrease in state funding for preschools. Although the level of state contribution to CCDF decreased, the state exceeded the required match. (2)During the same periods of reduced funding the number of children with high needs participating in state funded programs increased by 9%. The number of children in state-funded preschools increased each year during the period 2007-2010. (3)The fiscal investment per the number of children with high needs ranged from \$1200.00 per child to \$1048.00. Secondly, the State's political investment is significant as evidenced by the passage of legislation and Governor initiatives over the two decades. (1)The Kentucky Education and Reform Act of 1990 established state funded preschools. (2)Legislation expanded the role of family resource and youth service centers to include early learning and transition to school, after-school childcare, and family support. (3)The Early Childhood Task Force was charged by the governor to review and identify complementary elements to Head Start and the state-funded preschools to increase readiness for school success. Legislation resulting from these recommendations impacted development of the following programs: increased programs focusing on child health and mental health, a First Steps program for children Birth-3 with disabilities and their families, increased subsidies for child care, creation of community early childhood councils, professional development support for ECE and child care providers, a quality rating and improvement system. The essential building blocks for a high quality comprehensive early learning and development system have been the target of the state's continuous improvement initiatives. The results of these efforts are • Early learning and development standards (birth-4) developed in 2003 address the essential domains of school readiness and are linked to the K-12 program of study and the National Head Start Outcomes. • The Early Childhood Continuous Assessment System (2006) covers the essential domains of a comprehensive system

and is aligned with the state early learning and aligns with state early learning and development standards. • KIDS NOW programs emphasize preventive health care and early childhood mental health. • Family engagement strategies are components of the TQRIS, the Early Childhood Professional Development Framework, and the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers early childhood programming. • The framework for early childhood professional development (2001) governs articulation, core content, credentials, training and scholarships. • Within the framework of a statewide school readiness definition adopted by the Governor (2010), the Department of Education and Early Childhood Advisory Council are selecting the instrument for a kindergarten entry readiness assessment. • Child, program, ECE and program data is tracked across multiple discrete systems.

	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 reform agenda builds on the State's continuous improvement initiatives which are well documented in A(1) and has a high probability to impact outcomes related to school readiness. Strengthens of the proposed agenda include: (1)The elements of a quality plan are either under development or identified in the plan. (2)Clear reform goals address weaknesses or areas requiring further refinement (3)The reform agenda builds on an established pattern of continuous improvement. (4)The linkage of recommendations for improvement of the ELD system from the 2009 Governor's Task Force is evident in the proposed state plan. (5)Emphasis is placed on reducing the disconnects between the current elements and thus, moving the current system to a more integrated statewide system (6)Enhancement of professional development opportunities statewide addresses the needs generated by program quality requirements. (7)The articulated goals link directly to underdeveloped elements of the established state system identified in A(1) and build upon completed elements to provide access to more quality programs. A strong case was built for continued support of program quality initiatives recognizing the need for more integrated systems and high program quality expectations to produce the outcomes related to school readiness. (1)Expansion of participation in the TQRIS system is critical to achievement of the overarching reform agenda. However, the goal of 100% participation by 2013 is a significant stretch given the current number of voluntary participants and exclusion of certified or registered providers. The goal is ambitious yet reasonable for state-regulated programs. (2)Critical for achievement of the goal specific to closing the readiness gap is finalization of instrumentation and state regulations for implementation of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by Fall 2012 and the establishment of baseline data. Given this current status, the established goals are reasonable annual progress goals. (3)Improved child outcomes statewide are linked to the progressive goals for increased program quality goals. While program quality goals are stretch goals, the targets for increasing child participation in quality settings are more reasonably paced and achievable across the period of funding. The plan's emphasis on mechanisms required for increasing and sustaining program quality as well as accountability and feedback systems links directly to impacting school readiness. Key elements, their relationships, and steps required for change are clearly defined and described. An organizational structure has been developed to ensure accountability and integration across agencies. However, the mechanism for reciprocal linkage between the community early education councils with state level initiatives is not clearly defined. The focused investment areas link to weaknesses identified in A(1), such as weaknesses in access to professional development, family engagement, and assessment of kindergarten entry. TQRIS, the key element driving the reform agenda, requires increased integration of the state's early learning data systems. Strategic plans and investments in these projects increase program quality and thus, child outcomes.

	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)
<p>The State's plan for oversight and implementation of the reform agenda builds upon the established organizational structure supporting early education at the state level. The primary structures, Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Office of Early Childhood, have been instrumental in establishing the reform agenda. (1)Throughout the application the role of the Early Childhood Advisory Council has been documented relative to system improvement initiatives and specifically development of the reform agenda in this application. The explicit charge to the committee for implementation of the plan and its membership representation are additional strengths for development of a more integrated system. (2)MOUs from the key participating agencies, including the level of detail in the work scopes and their alignment with elements of the reform agenda document a clear path toward accomplishment of the required activities. (3)The Governor's Office of Early Childhood, the lead agency, has responsibility for oversight relative to the plan. Implementation responsibilities are shared with the Early Childhood Advisory Council thus ensuring cross agency decision-making and collaboration. The Advisory Council's interface with the Office of Early Childhood on past initiatives is a strong indication of the level of collaboration and joint commitment to improving the system of Early Learning. (4)Governance related roles and responsibilities are clearly identified (Table A31), consistent with agency and collaborative roles in implementing the reform agenda. The narrative documented the need for capacity building in revitalizing the community councils. Additional documentation of this need is evident in less than 50% (46%) of the councils providing letters of support. A defined plan, including goals, timelines, activities and associated fiscal costs is proposed. The potential for repurposing funding for sustainability is noted; however, the impact on the current use for community grants is not addressed. Letters from councils provided general commitment to the goals of the application; however, specific community initiatives were highlighted in a majority of the letters to document current participation in statewide programming or more locally based initiatives. Letters from a broad base of stakeholders documented support for the application and the proposed elements of the reform agenda.</p>

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	12

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)

Table A(4)-1 documents the following leveraging options: Tobacco Settlement Dollars, state general funds and CCDF quality set-asides. The amount of funding from these sources is consistent across the 4 years of the State Plan implementation. Existing funds will be used to support specific reform initiatives such as discretionary grants for the community early childhood councils, implementation of the revised TQRIS and administration of the kindergarten entry readiness assessment. Proportions of fund allocations across the participating agencies align with the roles and projected work scopes detailed in the MOUs and project specific responsibilities outlined in the budget narrative. Allocations for the projects are sufficient to support the detailed activities that align with the major elements of the reform agenda described in A (2). Infrastructure and project costs are reasonable based on the scope of the agenda, integration into the work of existing agencies and related agency commitments. The state is contributing 70M from sources other than the grant request (60M) to implementing the reform agenda. The requested grant funds are used to address one-time costs, such as design of the data system and central professional development systems and revision of the early learning standards. Current QRIS costs will be repurposed to support the new tiered system with the grant investment funding only 40% of these total development costs. • A significant short fall is noted for year 4 of approximately 6 million. While a commitment from the Secretaries of the participating agencies and Governor is noted (in a footnote for Table A(4)-1), funding has not been identified to cover this shortfall during the final year of the grant. The shortfall is specific to implementing and maintaining the new TQRIS system, a key anchor in the reform agenda. \$12M in incremental costs are not covered by existing funding streams. A continuous funding stream sufficient to support the ambitious reform agenda once implemented has not been established. The identified shortfall and no projected funding source for continuation raise concerns regarding sustainability of the reform efforts. Contingencies were not addressed.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	3

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

- (a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
 - (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
 - (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
 - (4) Family engagement strategies;
 - (5) Health promotion practices; and
 - (6) Effective data practices;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(1)

The state has implemented a tiered QRIS that was designed specifically to increase the quality of childcare. The program standards are based on the state's early childhood standards, quality indicators validated by research, environmental characteristics. The standards are measurable and meaningfully differentiate quality for the intended purpose. Participation in the current system is voluntary. Building on the current system, the development and implementation of a more robust and integrated TQRIS is a key component of the reform agenda in order to more effectively impact child outcomes for school readiness. Weaknesses of the current system for impacting school readiness were acknowledged. (1) Voluntary participation (2) Designed to increase the quality of childcare (3) Deficiencies in essential elements for a high quality system leading to school readiness (4) Limited evidence of program advancement in the current tier system, (i.e., although the program was launched in 2000, only 25% of participating providers are in the top 2 tiers of the 4-tier system). The reform agenda is to integrate, align and unify existing rating and improvement systems into a common TQRIS for all early learning and development programs. Licensing would be the first tier in the revised TQRIS. The following specifically address the weaknesses of the current system: (1) Required participation including Head Start and state-funded preschools (2) One common set of program standards aligned with childcare, Head Start, state-funded preschools and licensure requirements and addressing all of the elements of quality program standards as noted in the RTTELC. A work plan is provided which lays out reasonable steps, milestones, roles and timelines but lacks sufficient detail in the major areas of a high quality TQRIS given the extent of deficiencies noted in Table B1-1 and the current STARS system: validation of program standards, clear cross walk with early learning and development standards, effective data practices, and differentiated levels that directly address program quality. Documentation of the crosswalk between ELDS and programs requirements for licensing childcare settings, Head Start and preschools was not provided. This documentation would provide a clearer picture of the extent of the deficiencies noted in Table B1-1 and a clearer assessment of the appropriateness of the time lines in the work plan for this major reform component. Key elements of level or tier differentiation are not identified. Evaluation of the revised program standards against or alignment with national standards for quality early childhood education is not addressed. This omission raises questions regarding the extent to which the projected outcomes will be achieved and the extent to which the revised system will be effective in promoting the projected agenda outcomes. This weakness is of particular concern given the timeline of completion of the assessment of current standards and identification of the new standards by Spring 2012.

	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)

State-funded preschools and Head Start currently participate in monitoring systems although these systems are not a part of the current QRIS. The reform plan would include these programs and programs receiving CCDF funds in the integrated system. However, specific policies or regulations requiring participation in the new TQRIS are not clearly identified for either state-funded programs under the department of education or the licensed programs under Division of Child Care. Since monitoring systems are in place for all the state funded programs and child care it must be assumed that current policies would be revised. What is not clear is the degree to which participation will be mandatory or encouraged. State reimbursement rates through the Child Care Assistance Fund are set to supporting access to high quality childcare. Other state level subsidies and programs were not identified, rather strategies for supporting access to quality child care emphasized capacity building at the local level through the community early childhood councils. Given the compelling case made regarding the level of poverty across the state, reliance on local partnerships may not result in the anticipated impact on access. Table B2c sets ambitious targets of 100%, given the lack of clarity regarding policies and regulations. However, the targets may be achievable given the projected integration with current monitoring systems for Head Start and state funded preschools.

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

Although the tools for the current monitoring systems are valid and reliable, the instrumentation for the new TQRIS has not been determined. The work plan provides no detail concerning potential tools or selection criteria. The determination will be made by external evaluators, who have not been identified. This lack of specificity is of concern given the proposed timeline for implementation of the system in 2012. Additional criteria have been identified for the use of the tools in the TQRIS-- increased accuracy, decreased redundancies and a focus on child outcomes that drive school readiness. These criteria recognize the quality of the current monitoring systems in Head Start and state-funded preschools. A work plan describes key activities, milestones and timelines for the following components: (1) Selection of valid and reliable instruments through a process that assesses current monitoring tools and best practices in the field of early childhood (2) Development of a process for implementing the monitoring tool (3) Development of a plan for training raters The transparency of current state systems and stakeholder information dissemination strategies are strengths of the plan. However, accessibility issues are not addressed, e.g., educational level of parents, access to information in rural areas, limited access to technology, cultural and language differences, etc. These issues are particularly important given the description of the challenges of the state's geography and poverty level stated in the narrative.

	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)

Incentives for continuous improvement are to be built on expansion of current initiatives and supports across program types for an integrated system of support. These current initiatives and supports include (1) Differential reimbursements and financial support based on tier level (beyond entry level tier 1) (2) Differential reimbursement per child for programs for children with high needs (3) Cash awards and incentives for progress upward in tiers of the TQRIS. (4) Integration of the current "Early Childhood Program of Excellence" award program within the top tiers. Current supports for families are not identified. However, the plan for supporting access to high quality programs builds the community roles of the family resource and youth services centers, child care resources and referral agencies and integration and collaboration among ELD programs and CECC leadership in addressing local needs. A strength of the plan is the significant commitment of funding (13M from the grant and 4M or approximate 12% of the overall budget) to local capacity building. The plan uses actual data from the current system as baseline with projections based on financial modeling. A rationale for this model is not provided in the narrative. The model projects reasonable goals due to the anticipated inclusion of all state funded early learning and development programs in the system. Given the inclusion of programs currently participating in other monitoring systems, it would appear that a model based on cross system ratings would provide a clearer picture of the impact and growth on the top tiers. The performance targets for increasing the number of children enrolled in the top TQRIS tiers are ambitious yet achievable. Given the current continuous improvement requirements for the state funded preschools and Head Start, populations in these programs would enter the system at higher tiers during its implementation in 2013. The increases document a reasonable progression toward the initiative's full participation goals as well as movement of programs across the tiers.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	8

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 plan incorporates use of contracting with an external evaluator to validate the measures and assess the extent to which changes in ratings are related to child outcome data. However, there is no indication of who would be hired and the criteria for evaluator selection. While the basic elements required are identified, more explicit detail is required to fully determine the quality of the plan. Specifically, it is not clear from the narrative how the new integrated data systems will be linked to provide "validation data". The relationship of the timelines for implementation of TQRIS, launching of the data systems, and the timeline of the proposed validation process is not addressed.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>ELD standards vary by age and were validated by state and national experts as developmentally and linguistically appropriate. References further document awareness of the basis for such practice and include recommendations from national bodies such as NAEYC. The overview of the standards, linkage across standards and the alignment of benchmarks with standards document that all essential domains of school readiness are addressed. However, evidence of the inclusion of elements required for special populations such as children with disabilities or ELL is not evident. Nor is this addressed in the work plan review and revision of the standards. Revised ELD standards aligned with K-3 revised standards in early literacy and math; alignment with K-12 science standards is included in the projected work plan. This latter alignment is facilitated by inclusion of representatives from state-funded preschool programs on the state level standards team. Goals address further review for alignment with State readiness definition and Head State revised standards. Alignment with state early childhood system components is effectively documented; however evidence of the use across programs is limited. Evidence for use in programs is strongest for the state funded preschools programs based on ECE certification requirements and quality incentives such as the Classrooms of Excellence program. Incorporation into systems other than the state-funded preschool programs is not documented or addressed. The linkage with current indicators of quality in program monitoring systems is not documented; however, this weakness is addressed in the goal to integrate the revised standards across the TQRIS program standards. Current Early Learning Leadership Networks will be designated to specifically support KYECS implementation. The building of administrative and teacher leaders across the types of early learning and development programs should address the weakness noted in the limited documentation of use in programs, specifically curriculum and instructional activities.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	17

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)		
--------------------	--	--

Tools and support systems are currently in place serving primarily the state-funded preschool and Head Start programs. These resources include the Continuous Assessment Guide, cross-works between assessments and instruction, and training based on the workforce competency framework. Clearly stated goals form the basis for a well-developed and coherent plan for responding to the impact changes in the standards and the revised TQRIS will have for the current comprehensive assessment system. Linkages across the relevant components including workforce development have been clearly identified. An outcome of the plan would be greater coordination and standardization of assessment and data collection, reduction in duplication of assessments, a streamlined crosswalk process, and increased understanding of the use of assessment across program types. While the plan effectively addresses the assessment process and system integration, the following specific weaknesses in the assessment system are not addressed. First, there is insufficient detail of the extent to which the current continuous assessment guide addresses the adaptations required for children with special needs or ELL. Second, measures of the quality of adult-child interactions, a defined element of a comprehensive assessment system, are not required across programs, beyond Head Start (Table (A) (1)-7). These weaknesses are not addressed in the proposed plan for revision of the comprehensive assessment system.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (c)(4)

The current program quality system reflects differential levels of engagement across the tiers. However, the strategies reflect a minimum threshold rather than qualitatively different levels of engagement reflecting evidence based practice. The limited detail of the identified strategies does not provide sufficient documentation that the elements identified in the criteria have been addressed, including cultural considerations. A well-developed plan with activities addresses identified weaknesses in the standards and workforce competencies specific to family engagement. The timelines in the work plan are consistent with implementation of related reform agenda elements. Two new initiatives are a state level Center for Community and Family Engagement to collaborate with existing public and private resources and a community collaboration model facilitated by the CECCs. The effectiveness of these strategies is consistent with the reform agenda's goal of integrating systems while building capacity. No data or plan are provided to address the criterion element of increasing the number and percent of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported in using effective family engagement strategies.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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	9
<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> <p>Comments on (E)(1)</p> <p>The mandate requiring use of a common, multi-domain kindergarten readiness assessment is progressing through the regulatory process. Currently there is no common kindergarten readiness assessment nor have decisions been made regarding the assessment to be used. The plan developed identifies broad process steps required to meet the goal of full implementation by fall 2012. This ambitious timeline is driven in part by the anticipated implementation of the states P-12 assessment and accountability model which requires initial baseline data at kindergarten entry. Given the current status of decisions and the goal to assess all children entering kindergarten in Fall 2012, this timeline is ambitious. The following elements are strengths of the plan. (1)Department of Education and the Early Childhood Advisory Council subcommittee have been charged with the selection decision to ensure that the state's early learning and development standards and all essential domains will be addressed in the assessment (2)Significant funds have been budgeted to support implementation of the common assessment. (3)The early childhood student information system will be integrated with the P-12 longitudinal data system (4)The key activities identify the range of steps required leading to implementation. However, the lack of sufficient detail and coherence in the proposed activities are weakness, particularly given the ambitious implementation timeline. The plan lacks sufficient detail in the following critical areas: (1)Criteria in the RFP guiding the determination of assessment characteristics meeting the requirements of a common Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (2)Considerations required for the appropriate administration of the assessment with special populations of Children with High Needs</p>		

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the</p>		

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)

A compelling case has been made for a separate Early Childhood Database linked to the P20 Collaborative Data System. Foundation pieces are in place -- are currently building the elements as a part of the P20 system. (1)The "static" nature of the broader P20 system does not address the transactional database required by the nature of early childhood service delivery across program types (2)The data warehouse model of the P20 system does not allow timely access to date to inform policy and practice. (3)Early childhood programs require linking child level data across multiple service systems and programs and accessibility at the program level. The plan outlines milestones with limited detail as implementation steps. For example, the application states that all essential data elements are to be included based on the Early Learning Data Collaborative; however, these standards do not address all of the essential elements of an Early Learning data system as required in the RTTELC RFP. The specifications of the system address the issues raised in the case for a separate, linked system with attention to common data elements, transparency, uniform data collection, and inclusion of the essential data elements for an Early Childhood system (as identified in the fundamentals of a coordinated state early care and education data system.). Although the need is effectively established for a separate linked system, the connections between the multiple data structures, P20 collaborative, state longitudinal data system, the Early Childhood Data Warehouse, the transactional Early Childhood Data System are not clearly stated. This lack of clarity is problematic for understanding the truly integrated nature of the systems. The executive order mandates compliance with the requirements of all federal, state, and local privacy laws including HIPPA, FERPA, and IDEA.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	187

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The licensing, inspection, and childcare regulation system covers all programs and providers with three or more unrelated children. The new TQRIS will require all licensed or state regulated programs to participate. The opportunity to participate is further extended to registered and certified providers. The response to this competitive preference is integrated into the plan's development of local capacity through the community early childhood councils' outreach efforts. The impact of this expansion of the councils role is not addressed given the breadth of council involvement in multiple reform initiatives. A critical area not addressed is the incentives for provider participation. • The projected expansion of additional program types included in the TQRIS system would directly expand the number of children served in quality programs. However, given the question of the shortfall in year 4 and continuation of funding for TQRIS based on future allocations from the participating state agencies, the level of sustainability is unclear.

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)

Less than 70 percent of the maximum points were earned for selection criterion (E)(1)

Absolute Priority

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

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

A strong pattern of continuous improvement initiatives and past legislative and fiscal commitments over the last decade provide a solid base for the proposed reform agenda. The overall emphasis of this agenda on system integration and quality improvements is directly linked to broad impact on kindergarten readiness. The state-level infrastructure is in place for implementing the reform agenda. Although there is variability in the level of specificity of the plan, all elements of a comprehensive system have been addressed with priorities based on areas of greatest impact on child outcomes -- program quality (an enhanced rating and monitoring system), assessment for kindergarten readiness, workforce development and an integrated early childhood data system.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KY-5014

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 10:59 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(A)(1) The state demonstrates a strong commitment to high quality accessible Early Learning and Development programs as evidenced by: major legislation, an established TQRIS system, an established Workforce and Development System, and Early Learning Standards that have been implemented within early childhood programs for over 10 years. (A)(1)(a) Demonstrating its commitment to early childhood services, the applicant provides in Table (A)(1)-4 complete historical data on the states' financial investments since January 2007 to the present in all Early Learning and Development programs. Though total investments have decreased from \$228 million to \$185 million, the state indicates that some programs, such as Children with Special Health Care Needs and Mental Health services and the state Pre K programs, have experienced slight increases. (A)(1)(b) The applicant states that though there have been decreases in the overall total funding in Early Learning and Development programs, the state has been successful in maintaining and slightly increasing the number of children served from 126,049 to 126,128. The state's dedication to maintaining the number of children served is further evidenced by state agencies and programs who have avoided creating wait lists, reducing provider payment rates, or agencies moving to more restrictive eligibility criteria for services. (A)(1)(c) The state demonstrates a strong historical commitment to investing in early childhood. With the passage of the Kentucky Education and Reform Act (KERA) in 1990 (KERA), Kentucky laid the foundation for meeting the needs of young children in the state. This legislation established the state funded preschool program and supporting services. The Act was expanded in 2006, to serve children up to 150% of poverty guidelines. Again demonstrating the state's dedication to increasing the accessibility to Pre K programs for Children with High Needs. In addition, the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the importance of tracking children's outcomes. This is demonstrated by the longitudinal study that was conducted by The University of Kentucky on the KERA Preschool children from 1990 until 1999. The Reform Act also established the Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSC) in those school districts where at least 20% of the students are eligible for a free and reduced lunch program. The establishment of the FRYSC has created an infrastructure and platform for building an early childhood system of services. The state also passed legislation in 2000 which established permanent and dedicated funding for Kentucky's Early Learning and Development System, Kentucky Invests in Developing Success NOW (KIDS

NOW), funded through the Phase 1 Tobacco Settlement. Again this demonstrates a funding commitment by the state to support early childhood programs and systems. (A)(1)(d) The applicant describes a mixed status in its current efforts to build a high quality Early Learning and Development System. The status on each of the key areas are described below: - The state has established a set of Early Learning and Development Standards which cover ages birth through four and states that the standards address all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The Early Learning and Development Standards are linked and aligned to the Kentucky Department of Education's K-12 Program standards as presented in the appendix. The applicant proposes to review and revise the Early Learning and Development Standards in its plan. - The state proposes to develop a comprehensive assessment system. Currently the state has in place the Kentucky Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide which is provided to early childhood providers. The Guide is designed to provide guidance to early care and education providers in identifying and determining how and when to use appropriate assessment instruments. The applicant proposes to develop a more complete comprehensive assessment system including the identification of a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment tool which will be utilized by all providers statewide. - The applicant demonstrates a past commitment and understanding on the importance of promoting health practices in early children. Historically the state has promoted good health practices in many programs including; prevention of birth defects, immunizations for under insured, prevention of early childhood caries, health promotion and family support through the HANDS home visitation program, and providing technical assistance to child care programs through the use of Child Care Health Consultants. But the applicant does not address in (C)(3) how it proposes to improve upon these existing efforts or how it plans to incorporate or develop a progression of health standards throughout its Early Learning and Development System. - The applicant proposes to strengthen its current efforts in family engagement strategies which are addressed in the current TQRIS STARS for KIDS NOW system. In addition, the state provides evidence that topics related to family and community relationships are included in the Early Childhood Professional Development Framework. -The state demonstrates a strong and well established professional development system and proposes to create the Center on Professional Development to be housed in the Governor's Office. -The state admits that it has not implemented a state wide Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool but presents evidence that it is in various stages of identifying implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The applicant indicates the Early Childhood Council is currently selecting a universal tool which is based on the Governor's Early Childhood Task Force definition of school readiness. The Early Childhood Council is currently selecting a universal tool for adoption and anticipates that the Kentucky Board of Education will enact regulation and direct school districts to implement the tool by early 2012. -The state provides evidence that many elements of a data base system are in place including; assigning unique identifiers for children and programs and the development of a training data base to track professional development of early childhood providers.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

(A)(2)(a) Building upon the foundation of its early learning and development system currently in place, the state clearly articulates six goals in key component areas that will improve program quality and child outcomes for Children with High Needs in the state. (A)(2)(b) The applicant provides an organizational chart to convey its comprehensive approach and infrastructure for enhancing its current system of early childhood services. The applicant proposes to build a strong infrastructure for the implementation of activities and plans. There are many well established infrastructures in place including a State Early Childhood Advisory Council and an Office of Early Childhood housed in the Governor's Office. The state indicates it plans to build out the infrastructure within the local communities by revitalizing the local Community Early Childhood Councils (CECC). The state has clearly outlined, cross referenced, and justified four major areas to be addressed in the plan; High quality and accountable programs, promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, an early childhood workforce and establishing a system for measuring outcomes and progress. For each of the four areas the state outlines its plans to address each component and develop a comprehensive early childhood system. For example, for high quality accountable programs the applicant indicates that it will utilize the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) infrastructure as its platform for achieving a number of goals including: establishing one common statewide set of program standards, rate and monitor quality for all participating programs, and provide financial incentives and technical assistance supports to improve quality. (A)(2)(c) It is apparent by the applicant's response that the state agencies and administrators have an understanding of the interdependence of all key components of the state plan. For example, the applicant states that fully implementing Early Learning and Development Standards state wide is essential for ensuring kindergarten readiness and that a key to the successful implementation of the standards is a great workforce who have a common definition and understanding of the Early Learning Standards statewide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

(A)(3)(a) 1. Included in the application is an organizational chart representing the integrated organizational structure that Kentucky will use to administer the State Plan. 2. The applicant clearly articulates the governance related roles and responsibilities of all key agencies including the lead agency which will be the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. In addition, the Governor by executive order established the Early Childhood Advisory Council and appointed the Executive Director of the newly established Office of Early Childhood as the chair. All key partnering agencies sit as members on the council and will serve as the decision making body for all activities of the State Plan. The Early Childhood Council also serves as the Interagency Coordinating council for Part C of IDEA. 3. The Governor's Office of Early Childhood will be responsible for orchestrating and making decisions that cut across all participating agencies. The Office of Early Childhood will provide oversight in implementing the plan, changes to the plan and oversight of the budget. The Office indicates it will seek input from all members of the State Early Childhood Advisory council. The applicant states that if there is an impasse in decision making then the Secretary of the Governor's Executive Cabinet will make the final decision. 4. The state provides a broad general description regarding which input will be gathered into the state plan and activities. The applicant does state that Public meetings of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council will be the means in which representatives from participating programs, early childhood providers, parents and families will have the

opportunity to provide input. It is not clear if parents or families of Children with High Needs are members of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council. (A)(3)(b) To demonstrate proof and evidence of commitment by each participating agency, the applicant has provided four signed MOU's from the Office Of Early Childhood, the Cabinet of Health and Family Services, the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet and the Kentucky Department of Education. Each MOU outlines all terms and conditions, including dedication of existing agency funding, that reflect a strong commitment to the state plan, a listing of scope of work for each section of the grant application, and signed by each authorized representative. (A)(3)(c) The state provides evidence of the commitment of a broad group of stakeholders who will assist in the implementation of the goals outlined in the state plan. The applicant has submitted 120 signed letters of support demonstrating the breadth and solid range of support for the state plan. The various support letters include 28 Community Early Childhood Councils (of 67), 9 local chambers of commerce, 13 universities, the Kentucky Head Start Association, the STRIVE Partnership and two of the largest school districts in the state. But only 28 of the 67 Community Early Childhood Councils have submitted letters of support. The Community Early Childhood Councils are a critical element in implementing some of the activities statewide. Additionally outside organizations and private philanthropic organizations including Toyota Motor Manufacturing and JP Morgan Chase have submitted letters indicating support from the private sector. Most letters indicate their involvement in the development of the state plan and are general letters indicating their continued support.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(4)

(A)(4)(a) The applicant identifies existing state funds in Table (A)(4)-1 (the Tobacco Master Settlement dollars, CCDF quality funds, and Kentucky Department of Education General Fund) which will be used to achieve the outcomes in the State plan. In addition the applicant provides a complete comprehensive narrative description detailing how the funds will be used. The budget also reflects the states significant contribution of \$70 million to support implementation of the activities outlined in the plan. This amount is more than the amount requested for grant funds and demonstrates the states commitment to the grant. But the budget also reflects a \$5.8 million shortfall in year four of the grant and has not determined how these funds will be generated. (A)(4)(b)(1) The state has provided a complete listing of state funds to be utilized as outlined in (A)(4)(A)-1 (A)(4)(b)(2) The applicant indicates that all funds to build an integrated data system will utilize Race to the Top funds for four years but fails to identify funds to sustain the system beyond the grant period. (A)(4)(b)(3) The applicant identifies funds to be distributed to Participating State Agencies and plans to distribute funds to local organizations, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations. The state does demonstrate that a significant amount of funding will be distributed to the support and enhancement of Community Early Childhood Councils (CECC) for implementation of a variety of activities outlined in the state plan and for building a state early childhood infrastructure. (A)(4)(c) The applicant indicates that the state has made a commitment to support the work of this grant beyond the four year grant period but indicates there will be a shortfall of \$5.9 million in year four when grant funds will not be sufficient to cover the cost of the project at that time. The Governor and the Secretaries of the key agencies committed to the grant have agreed to work to fund the ongoing \$12 million per year to sustain the early childhood system but have not identified a funding source or a timeline for proactively addressing the issue.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	3

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)
<p>(B)(1)(a) The state has maintained a QRIS system since 2000 (STARS for KIDS NOW). The current TQRIS does not address all six areas of a tiered quality rating and improvement system as defined by the grant announcement. The state indicates that the current TQRIS is undergoing review by an external evaluator but fails to indicate the timeline for completion of the evaluation in conjunction with planned activities. 1. The state recognizes that the current Early Learning and Development Standards do not address the essential domains of development or school readiness for children ages three and four. The standards for this age group are outlined by educational content areas including: Arts and Humanities, English and Language Arts, Health Education, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science and Social Studies. The Standards fail to address social and emotional development and approaches to learning. The applicant presents evidence that the current early learning standards for 3-5 year olds is aligned with the the K-12 Academic Standards. The state proposes to strengthen the Early Childhood program standards to make sure they comprehensively cover all elements of school readiness but fails to indicate how they will convert the current standards which address content areas for four year olds. The budget does not reflect the depth in which the task to maintain the implementation of the early learning standards (\$15000 per year). In its process to revise the current Early Learning Standards the applicant outlines activities to review and cross walk current standards to develop a common set of standards by Spring 2012. This timeline does not appear feasible due to the complexity of the work. The applicant also fails to indicate how the programs standards will be integrated. 2. The applicant does not provide sufficient details in the development of a comprehensive assessment system. For example, the comprehensive assessment system, as referenced in (C)(2), only describes plans to identify research questions and does not efficiently describe how the applicant plans to develop such a system. The applicant states that the current TQRIS (STARS NOW) system is undergoing evaluation and upon completion will include research questions regarding which measures and assessments are most instrumental to measure and improve children's outcomes. 3. The applicant does not provide sufficient information or details in Section D describing how the TQRIS programs standards will align with teacher qualifications. 4. The applicant states that the current Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System includes requirements for family partnerships and family strengthening as referenced in the appendix but this was unsubstantiated. The applicant does not provide an adequate description or plans for incorporating family engagement activities into the new TQRIS. The state simply states its plans for establishing the Center for Community and Family Engagement who will work with the Early Childhood Advisory Council to include family engagement standards in the TORIS. 5. The activities outlined in addressing Health promotion practices appear to be incomplete. No activities are identified or cross referenced. 6. The applicant does not address effective data practices as defined by this grant announcement. The definition of effective data practices includes gathering Essential Data Elements and entering them into the State's Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The applicant references effective data practices with a comprehensive assessment system in (C)(2) but not (E)(2). (B)(1)(b)The applicant provides a copy of the current TQRIS in the appendix. The current system is clear, measurable, and differentiates between tiers. The applicant indicates that it is in the process of revising the TQRIS. (B)(1)(c)The applicant has a clear plan for integrating and linking the current licensing system and licensed providers into the new TQRIS by placing all licensed providers on Tier One and expanding the tiered system to five levels. The TQRIS is currently voluntary and all providers will be required to stay at tier one to maintain licensure when the TQRIS is revised.</p>

	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)

(B)(2) The applicant has a clearly articulated plan in place for increasing the number of publicly funded early care and education programs into the revised TQRIS. (a) Under current policy all CCDF funded early childhood programs are required to participate in the state's TQRIS. The applicant has outlined a feasible timeline and plan to phase in all Head Start and State funded Pre School programs into the TQRIS over the course of a year. In addition, the applicant recognizes that the state IDEA Part C services are consultative in nature and cannot be measured through a TQRIS. The applicant plans on ensuring that IDEA Part C staff will participate in training on statewide program standards. (b) The applicant proposes a plan to "codify" program integration models to meet the needs of more families and to develop tool kits to support local communities in replicating and implementing the codified models. It is presumed by the applicant that this innovative approach of program integration and model tool kits will meet the needs of families, but it fails to address issues such as full day full year programming or promotion for the implementation of these models in highly concentrated areas of need. In addition, the applicant states it has set forth efforts to ensure that subsidy reimbursement rates through CCAP are sufficient for families who need and have access to them, and will institute new strategies to help more families afford high-quality child care, but does not provide sufficient information as to timeline, or identified activities in which to do this. (c) The applicant has set ambitious and achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the TQRIS including providing baseline data as required.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	5

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) The state provides an adequate description of the current monitoring tools and systems in place for rating early learning and development programs in the state. The applicant proposes to develop a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System but does not provide sufficient detail or enough specificity to determine the quality of the system. (a) and (b) The applicant indicates that the STARS TQRIS system is currently under evaluation but does not provide information or timeline in which the evaluation will be completed. There is insufficient information to determine if this current evaluation will be completed in coordination with a newly selected tool or tools and a revised TQRIS monitoring system in place by May-June 2012. The timeline does not appear feasible given the complexity of the activities to be accomplished. For example the state proposes to identify specific tools that will address all early childhood programs and settings including center based, home based, and by age group within the given time frame. In addition, the state appears to focus on identifying valid tools for measuring environmental quality and adult-child interactions, but does not address the process for validating other program standards for a complete TQRIS rating and monitoring system. In addition, the applicant references "Classrooms of Excellence" for identifying high quality state-funded preschool classrooms but provides no criteria or example in the appendices.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	15

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) Historically, the state has maintained a TQRIS system through its STARS for KIDS NOW since 2001. The applicant indicates that it will develop and implement a multifaceted program supporting an "improvement infrastructure". Currently, public Preschool, Head Start, and licensed child care programs are all provided training and supports. The current TQRIS maintains 25 STARS Quality Counselors and 10 professional development counselors that work with facilities and assist programs in moving up the tiers system. Programs receive a one time cash STAR Achievement Award and quality incentive dollars which are made available on a quarterly basis. There is also a career scholarship program and financial incentives provided with increased award amounts for differing tier levels and differing programs. Current supports for families are provided through Community Early Childhood Councils and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (B)(4)(a) The applicant plans to continue the current financial support system and incentives for those programs who move up the STARS Tier system except for Head Start and public preschool programs who will receive incentives only at the top two tiers. The applicant plans to create additional incentives through a competitive process to reward "Early Childhood Programs of Excellence" based on the current "Classrooms of Excellence" program for preschool programs. The applicant does not provide a detailed description or list the criteria for determining a "Classrooms of Excellence". The applicant proposes to collaborate with the Kentucky Higher Education Advancement Association to coordinate scholarships for those programs who are serving high proportions of children in with high need but does not indicate what this relationship or process will look like beyond the current system. (See D)(2)(b)) The applicant indicates that it will create a Center for Professional Development in the Governors Office of Early Childhood to coordinate available training and proposes a year long institute but does not address increased incentives or scholarships beyond what is already provided. The applicant is examining the current STARS TQRIS and determining the effectiveness of the current technical assistance system that is provided. (B)(4)(b) The applicant proposes to support the redevelopment of Community Early Childhood Centers as the community hub for increasing collaboration and reducing duplication and outreach to families through the Family Resource and Youth Services and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The state also proposes to utilize the model program integration tool kits to assist local programs in aligning services for families. This is a functional infrastructure for ensuring access and reducing duplication of services to families. (B)(4)(c) The applicant has identified and set ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing the number of Early Learning and Development programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Achievable targets for increasing the number and percentage of children with high needs enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System are identified.

	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 is in the process of evaluating and validating the current state TQRIS by an external evaluator. A timeline for when the reevaluation will be completed is not provided. (B)(5)(a)(b) The applicant indicates that it will plan on contracting with an external evaluator to use research-based measures and assess over time whether the tiers proposed in the "to be developed" five tier TQRIS actually differentiate levels of quality. Child outcome data will be used to determine the effectiveness of the revised TQRIS is based on comprehensive assessments including the newly identified Kindergarten Assessment tool. The applicant does not indicate or identify what the school readiness indicators will be in the newly designed Kindergarten Entry Assessment as described in E 1. The applicant also does not indicate how findings will be used for program improvement or in making appropriate changes or adjustments to 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)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	10

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (c)(1)

(C)(1) The state has maintained a set of early learning and development standards since 2003. The current set of standards were revised in 2009, address all developmental domains for children ages birth to three but do not address all essential domains for school readiness for children age three to five. The state recognizes this and has indicated the Early Learning Standards will be revised. The applicant does not provide evidence that the revised standards will be culturally and linguistically appropriate. (C)(1)(a) The applicant indicates that the current standards will be refined to ensure they cover all Essential Domains of development and the broad definition of School Readiness as defined by the Governor. This broad definition proclaims that all children will enter school ready to engage in and benefit from learning experiences that best promote the child's success. The definition further describes the essential domains for school readiness as; approaches to learning, health and physical health, language and communication development, social and emotional development, and cognitive and general knowledge and will be completed by Summer 2012, but does not provide a detailed description of the activities or steps that will be taken to accomplish this. (C)(1)(b) The state does not provide sufficient information in its proposal to align the Early Learning and Development Standards with K-12 standards. The applicant references an "alignment document" that aligns the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards for Mathematics and English Arts. It is unclear which document the applicant is referencing in the appendices. (C)(1)(c) The state proposes to integrate and disseminate the new Early Learning Standards across all systems of early learning providers through the newly developed Early Learning Leadership Network. The Early Learning Leadership Network includes, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Head Start Training and Technical Assistance and other training teams, which have statewide reach.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (c)(2)

(C)(2) The applicant has maintained and established the Kentucky Early Childhood Assessment Guide since 2003 when Kentucky launched its Build a Strong Foundation for School Success initiative. The guide was established to coordinate the Early Learning and Development Standards, parent guides, and the self assessment study document for child care providers. The document is used to provide background information on the appropriate use of and need for continuous assessment. The Guide is one of a series of efforts the state has put in place in order to strengthen the states early childhood system of services. (C)(2)(a and b) The applicant indicates that it will work with Early Learning and Development programs and providers including members of the newly established Early Learning Leadership Network and Community Early Childhood Councils. The purpose will be to review Kentucky's Continuous Assessment Guide and in the development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment yet to be identified. The state does not provide sufficient detailed information of how recommendations will be solicited or what the process will be. (C)(2)(c) The applicant proposes to streamline the current Continuous Assessment Guide by eliminating several classroom/instructional assessments but does not describe in detail how this will be accomplished. (C)(2)(d) The applicant states it will work with the professional development and assessment subgroups of the State Advisory Council and the new Center for Professional Development to ensure the revised Continuous Assessment Guide is embedded in training at the local level through the newly established Community Early Learning Leadership Networks but does not provide sufficient detail or describe the process.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (c)(4)

(C)(4)The applicant indicates that it has already established and implemented many culturally and linguistically appropriate programs for family engagement. These programs include: Family Resources Youth Services Centers, community action programs, home visitation (HANDS). The applicant proposes to build upon existing services and establish a Center for Community and Family Engagement utilizing the Community Early Childhood Councils as a platform for working and training child care programs on family engagement. (C)(4)(a) Family partnerships and family strengthening standards are incorporated into the state's Quality Rating and Improvement system. The state proposes to strengthen family engagement standards in the newly revised TQRIS. The applicant does not provide sufficient information on the content or strategies on the progression of the standards to be included in the revised TQRIS. (C)(4)(b) Teaching and learning topics on family and community engagement are integrated into the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant does not provide documentation on the number of existing or projected numbers of Early Childhood Educators who have received training. Nor does it provide a plan for collecting these numbers. (C)(4)(c) The applicant indicates that non-profit organizations such as United Way are implementing Ages and Stages and Born Learning in portions of the state. The Health Access Nurturing Development Services(HANDS), the Family Resource Youth Service Centers and Child Care Resource and referral agencies provide services to parents statewide. The applicant does not provide information on expanding the existing efforts by United Way statewide.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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 (b)(1)

(D)(1)(a) - (c) The applicant has developed and maintained an early childhood professional development framework that includes key content areas such as articulation, core content, progression of credentials, scholarships, and training since 2001. Kentucky's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework was recently expanded to include information on technical assistance, coaching, and mentoring. This expansion will assist the state in ensuring the quality of the training provided to early care and education staff. The applicant proposes to have Kentucky's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework reviewed by the Professional subgroup of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Center for Professional Development in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. Currently there are 29 approved programs, including community colleges, public and private colleges and all universities, that are aligned with Kentucky's Workforce Knowledge and

Competency Framework. The applicant recognizes that well educated early childhood providers are key to improving child outcomes. The applicant has identified four key activities in which to ensure the development, implementation and effective use Kentucky's Workforce Knowledge and competency Framework. The four key activities identified are: alignment of the Framework with the TQRIS, established levels of training, continue to improve articulation agreements with institutes of higher education, and create a unified delivery system for training. The applicant has outlined sequential plans for building a strong foundation for the Workforce and Competency Framework. For example, the applicant indicates it will begin by reviewing the current set of core knowledge and skills required for early care and education providers.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	18

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

(D)(2)The applicant proposes to build upon existing systems in supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities. The applicant proposes to create the Center for Professional Development in the Governors Office to coordinate and facilitate training among providers. (D)(2)(a)The state currently maintains a strong network of Professional Development Counselors to assist and support early childhood professionals in developing Professional Growth plans and accessing non-degree and degree programs. The Early Childhood Advisory Council subcommittee on Professional Development will develop a system of online professional development in order to increase access to training and meet the needs of rural early childhood providers.

(D)(2)(b) A scholarship program called KIDS NOW Early Childhood Development Scholarship (\$1 million) to assist in the recruitment of early childhood providers has been established and maintained by the state. Providers are eligible to receive up to \$1800 a year. (D)(2)(c) The applicant currently maintains two major training registry systems used by Early Care professions; The Early care and Education Training Records Information system and Training Finder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network. The applicant proposes to create a unified Professional Development Database requiring all Early Childhood Professional Development providers to participate. Trainers will be required to report outcomes and abilities of those trained and submit plans that incorporate the principles of the Fundamentals of Effective Teaching in order to increase the quality of training. The applicant also proposed to establish the Community Early Learning Leadership Networks of training and technical assistance providers. The applicant does not address how it will report aggregated data on the retention of early childhood providers.

(D)(2)(d)(1) The state provides baseline data on the current number of institutions participating in the Kentucky Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework demonstrating a strong partnership and sets ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing the number of post secondary institutions and professional development providers. (D)(2)(d)(2) The applicant provides baseline data on the current number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

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	16

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's Board of Education has drafted regulation to develop a kindergarten assessment plan to be administered to children during the first 30 days of their admission into kindergarten; covers all essential domains of school readiness; will be used in conformance with the recommendation of the National Research report on Early Childhood; is valid and reliable for its intended purposes and target populations, and aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. The applicant proposes that in early 2012 through a competitive bidding process, one common state wide Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be identified. (E)(1)(a) The applicant plans to put out for competitive bid an RFP for the identification of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Draft regulation requires that the assessment be aligned with the school readiness definition which incorporates the Essential Domains of School Readiness and Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards. The applicant has proposed that the cost for the assessment will be \$1.3 million and will be covered by the Department of Education. (E)(1)(b) The applicant indicates that both the Kentucky Department of Education and the Early Childhood Advisory Committee sub committee on assessment will consider criteria for the RFP and for the procurement of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment instrument that is research based, valid, and reliable. (E)(1)(c) The applicant proposes an ambitious plan to assess all kindergartners beginning in the fall of 2012. This timeline appears short in its implementation given that the applicant proposes to post an RFP in early 2012, make the award, assure alignment with the state Early Childhood Standards, which also will be in the review process, and train all key personnel in administering the instrument within a nine month time frame. (E)(1)(d) The applicant proposes to build capacity within the current data system "Infinite Campus" and the P20 data platform to identify baseline school readiness data by the fall of 2012. This again appears to be a short time frame for uploading data into a data system from an instrument which has not been identified. (E)(1)(e) The Kentucky Board of Education will provide funding for the purchase of the proposed Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

	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)

(E)(2)The applicant indicates that it has a P20 Data Collaborative in place. The state proposes to create a Live data system for the purposes of more closely monitoring children's development prior to kindergarten and assist in informing policy and practice to target support for program improvements and professional development. The applicant has identified critical elements and an ambitious timeline for development and implementation with full utilization of the database by 2014. (E)(2)(a)The state currently collects some data in early child education, and in social/health programs. The applicant proposes to build a coordinated data system which will assign a unique identifier, collect demographic information about a child and their family, collect assessment, and services information, and outcomes and collect information on service providers. (E)(2)(b) The applicant indicates that Kentucky has made progress in building a data system and has established systems utilizing unique child and program identifiers under the P-20 Data Collaborative. The applicant is currently working to establish an Early Childhood Warehouse which will collect data from multiple early childhood providers. The applicant indicates that the new system will be able to create an Early Childhood Transcript which will contain vital information. (E)(2)(c) The applicant indicates that the state is developing a data warehouse within the P20 infrastructure utilizing funds from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee. (E)(2)(d) The applicant proposes to develop a transactional live data system in real time. (E)(2)(e) By executive order, the Governor established the current P20 Data Collaborative mandates to ensure that the P20 system is in compliance with the requirements of all federal, state, and local privacy laws including HIPPA, FERPA, and IDEA. The P20 system de-identifies data and has a governing board to ensure secure and appropriate data.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	200

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (F)(2)

CPP 2 (a) The applicant does not provide information on how it proposes to address or revise current state licensing and inspection requirements for all programs that serve TWO or more children. CPP 2 (b) The applicant proposes to encourage non-licensed providers to participate in the TQRIS but does not provide sufficient information or describe a means by which it will develop incentives for private providers.

Priorities

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

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)(6)

The applicant has addressed criterion in (E)(1) and has scored 80% of the maximum points available.

Absolute Priority

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

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 applicant has provided a proposal which fully demonstrates how it will build an early childhood system of services that will increase the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs ensuring they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The applicant has established a Governance structure which includes all key partners across all Early Learning and Development Programs. This governance structure which will provide oversight and orchestrate all activities identified within the plan is built upon the State Advisory Council which consist of 26 members. The applicant also demonstrates a proven commitment to investing in early childhood services. The state has 10 years of experience in providing a TQRIS system and supported Workforce and Professional Development System. The applicant proposes to improve upon these systems by increasing the current TQRIS to a five tiered system and integrating all licensed programs into the entry level at Tier One. The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the importance of a high quality early childhood workforce. The established Center on Workforce and Professional Development will be fully supported by the Department of Education and will continue to provide financial support and incentives to providers who enter into the Kentucky Lattice for Early Childhood Professional Development. The applicant recognizes the need to revise and update the current Early Learning Standards and align the standards with the K-12 program. This has already begun and the applicant will ensure that the newly proposed Kindergarten Readiness Assessment tool, to be identified, will be implemented statewide across all providers. The applicant will ensure that all critical elements of School Readiness are included in the new tool and that a system of training will be provided to assure reliability and use of the tool by all publicly funded providers. The applicant indicates that the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment tool will be part of a comprehensive assessment system. This information will be used to collect data on the status of children's growth and development. The state will develop an Early Childhood Data Warehouse which will be incorporated within the current P20 data system. Data collection will be at the individual child, provider, and program level allowing for the collection of information provided to state agency management, policy makers, and programs and assist them in the decision making process ensuring continuous improvement of the early childhood system. The applicant proposes the development or enhancement of major infrastructures in the design of the their Early Childhood System. The applicant proposes to enhance the Community Early Childhood Councils (CECC) as a platform at the local level and to function as a conduit for facilitating collaboration across all early childhood programs. The CECC's will play a key role in implementing training and disseminating information statewide such as the newly revised Early Learning Program Standards, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment tool, and providing support, outreach and engagement of families. The applicant also proposes to develop the Community Early Learning Leadership Network (CELLN) for facilitating training at the local level with a focus in communities with the highest need children. The applicant demonstrates its financial supports to the efforts outlined within the proposal by committing an additional \$69 million of state funds for a total of over \$129 million over the course of four years. The state indicates that there may be a shortfall in year four of the proposal but states that the Governor and state commissioners are committed to finding the funding.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # KY-5014

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 3:34 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, 15

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)

In the State Plan Kentucky describes its commitment to support Children with High Needs so that they enter Kindergarten ready to succeed. The Plan explains a significant percentage of the population has low educational levels and lives in high poverty. Its commitment to early learning and development documented in the proposal is fragmented and lacks a comprehensive and integrated system to successfully support Children with High Needs to be prepared for school readiness. Many of its accomplishments include the development of Early Learning and Development Standards for children from Birth to Age 4 (which have been in place since 2003), its rich history with Head Start, the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990, KIDS NOW legislation focusing on child health, substance abuse treatment for pregnant mothers, oral health and prevention programs, universal newborn screening, HANDS home visiting program, early childhood mental health initiatives, and the state's enhancements for early care and education at the state and local level. Some of the strengths identified in the proposal include that children served by CCDF remained fairly stable however funding was significantly decreased from 2007 to 2011 causing this reviewer to consider the quality of services and effectiveness of the impact on children and families. A stable number of children are being served in Early Head Start, Head Start, State funded preschool, Part-C and Part-B, and CCDF. The application describes strong and collaborative efforts in the areas of Maternal and Child Health, supporting families via HANDS - a home visiting program and early childhood mental health initiatives, and enhancements to the Early Care and Education systems including the state QRIS STARS for KIDS NOW. The following are areas of weakness described in this proposal for a systematic and comprehensive statewide system of supporting Children with High Needs. The state does not have a state funded Early Head Start program and a significant lack of focus on its youngest citizens - infants and toddlers. Children with High needs in Parts B and Part C show a drop in the number of children served in 2010 and a significant decrease in funding from 2009 to 2010. The State Plan describes a drop in number of children served in the state funded Preschool with steadily decreasing funding from 2009 to 2011. The state's Comprehensive Assessment System is described as siloed and lacks the ability for comprehensive statewide data collection. The proposal identifies Children with High Needs who are homeless (3.6%) and English Language Learners (7.1%) however the state does not address these specific groups of children and families in the proposal. Overall the proposal has

significant strengths (e.g., Early Childhood Educator professional development) and significant weaknesses as well (e.g., siloed data collection system).

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)
<p>The state plans to build on existing systems which is a strength of this application. a) Kentucky's ambitious plan includes a commitment to children across early learning settings through expansion of a new and updated TQRIS system. Adding 2,500 Tier 1 programs will be a challenge for this state to accomplish however plans for strengthening systems of Professional Development, Technical Assistance through expanded trainers and funding appear to be realistic. b) The overall summary clearly articulates a clear and credible path toward goals. This includes 2 anchoring elements – improved TQRIS system and establishing a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Four essential supporting elements are included – refresh and disseminate Early Learning and Development Standards and corresponding Comprehensive Assessment System; an integrated professional development system; systematic use of the P-20 Data Collaborative; and an emphasis on family engagement strategies. c) The proposal outlines rationale for selection of Focused Investment Areas (C)(1) implementing Early Learning and Development Standards, (2) Comprehensive Assessment System to focus on assessments and data systems to support and guide instruction and systems and (4) Engaging and Supporting Families. (D)(1) and (D)(2) describe plans to establish a Center of Professional Development as a means to drive improvements in the early learning workforce. Strategies include updating its career lattice, deeper articulation agreements with higher education institutions, and creation of credentials for coaching and online training. Continuation of scholarships for advancement of careers within the context of the new professional development framework aligned with the Early Learning Standards will provide incentives for professionals to continue their skills and knowledge in early learning. (E)(1) and (E)(2) focus on how the state will improve a systemic data collection and analysis system that will allow it to track improvements over time and determine next steps for continued improvements to its early learning and development system. With all of these components in place, Kentucky will be well positioned to increase school readiness for its Children with High Needs and provided a High Quality Response to articulating the early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</p>

	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)(4)

This section receives a score for Substantially implemented response as a wide variety of state level agencies and stakeholders included letters of commitment to the RTT-ELC proposal. The state proposes the grant will be managed by the Office of Early Childhood which is housed within the Office of the Governor. The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) will serve as governing board for the Office of Early Childhood. Staff from other agencies involved in the proposal will sit on the ECAC which meets monthly to provide input from their respective points of view. The Governor's office will orchestrate and make decisions about overall strategy, implementation planning, changes to the existing plan, and ongoing budgeting for initiatives undertaken pursuant to the grant. Letters of support from a wide variety of agencies provide evidence that each will be involved and is committed to the goals and outcomes of this proposal. Four state agencies signed MOU's for the work detailed in the grant. Numerous state, regional and local organizations provided letters of support and are coordinating their efforts which demonstrates a strong commitment to and support for this plan. The support detailed in this proposal is comprehensive and will provide clear expectations for delivery of the services, systems and strategies of this proposal. Private funding to support this plan is being sought from philanthropic, business and civic organizations which will build a base of support for sustaining the work past the grant period.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	11

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 budget outlines general expenses to meet the goals of this proposal. Line items include broad information about expenses covered by state agencies with extensive supporting details in Section VIII of the proposal. A statement regarding how the state plans to sustain funding through the Governor's Office and Secretaries of various departments of the legislature is also included however specific plans for identifying additional sources for the \$5.9M shortfall in Year 4 are not identified. The majority of funding will be managed by the state organizations including the Race to the Top Administrator in the Governor's Office, Department of Education, and TQRIS which will be temporarily housed at the Cabinet for Health and Family Services until a final decision is made about where the office will be located. The budget for this proposal includes enough detail to explain how the funds will be used to support the overall goals and outcomes for this proposal. Costs for the scope of work are clearly detailed however the \$12M needed to continue the Plan after Year 4 lacks a clear description of how the State will assure sustainability. The State provides a Medium Quality Response to the budget implementation and sustainability for this proposal.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(1)

The narrative includes a description which encompasses all six required tiered Program Standards. A comprehensive evaluation of STARS is currently underway to determine the effectiveness and meaningfulness of differing program quality levels and their corresponding effect on children's school readiness. The strategy described in the proposal to phase-in reimbursement rates, administration and operation changes to the current STARS during the term of this grant cycle will be guided by the results of the evaluation. Existing early learning programs that are required to meet monitoring requirements other than the STARS Rating System such as Head Start and State-funded preschool programs will require a significant change in political will as well as focused funding to successfully incorporate all early learning programs in the new redesigned TQRIS. Training and support strategies to address this issue are included in the proposal and should increase support by stakeholders resulting in a more successful implementation. Weaknesses in the narrative are an incomplete explanation of plans for linking the state licensing agency and the TQRIS agency. A more complete explanation of how the child care licensing requirements will meet the first tier of the TQRIS was missing from the proposal. In addition it is not clear how the budgeted amounts for Year 4 will coincide with plans for implementation of the statewide TQRIS.

	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)

The narrative describes Kentucky's current system of supporting Children with High Needs in early learning settings by targeting STARS toward programs participating in Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Missing from the narrative is an incomplete description of how the state will include Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA, part C of IDEA, and Title 1 of ESEA. The narrative includes a description of how Kentucky plans to support and educate local counties on effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain supply in high needs areas by disseminating information on successful local initiatives - but does not include specific strategies for how the RTT-ELC fund will collect this data and evaluate these initiatives. The promotion of private-public partnerships to fund program improvement described in this section will enhance the ability for local communities to sustain changes past the end of the funding term. Although the proposal provides a description of ambitious plans for the number of state funded preschools, Early Head Start and Head Start programs that will participate in TQRIS, not all of the Early Learning and Development programs in the State are currently participating so partial implementation scores were given.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	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 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 Plan describes the Early Learning and Development (ELD) programs participating in TQRIS will use valid and reliable tools to rate and monitor quality. As a part of the STARS evaluation which is currently underway, the state plans to use the evaluation results to choose appropriate, valid and reliable tools to collect data to support the new and comprehensive TQRIS. The proposal outlines the phase-in process for how the state plans to achieve this goal over the 4-year period of the competition funding. Current programs (Head Start, State Funded Preschool) will use the tools and practices required by their respective funders, other ELD programs will use other assessments - all of which will be challenging to track in a common data base. Missing from the plan is a detailed description of how infants and toddlers will receive as much focus as 3-5 year old children to include ALL children. The Plan describes specific plans to incorporate current raters into a training program to maintain the highest level

of inter-rater reliability on selected measurement tools. Raters are separate from the monitoring process to allow a separation of ratings and coaching for improved quality which is a strength of this TORIS design. The Plan stipulates that parents are provided with information about quality ratings in licensed early learning settings – but not in Head Start or state funded preschools. Parent access to information about quality early learning programs through website searches were described with a detailed plan for activities, milestones, roles and timelines for implementation during the grant period. For the families to have ready access to information about the quality of early learning programs enrolled in the TORIS, a stronger public awareness campaign will be needed. One component of the public awareness campaign is a website for families however many low income families do not have access to the internet which is a weakness in this proposal. The state was scored based on Medium Quality Response and Implementation.

	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)	
<p>Kentucky has a 10-year history of implementing TORIS in regulated child care settings including family child care homes. Technical Assistance, incentives and higher subsidy rates are all included in the existing system and will be expanded to meet the needs of the new integrated TORIS. This strong history of implementation will give this state a solid foundation to build the new, integrated TORIS for its state. Compensation programs for child care providers could be described in more detail in the narrative to allow an assessment by the reviewers and for planning purposes. The Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies and Community Early Childhood Council's (CECC's) provide referrals for working families to access supports such as medical care, transportation, meal programs, etc. No financial incentives or detailed plans for families to access quality child care settings are included other than using Child Care Development Funds as incentives for the TORIS programs. The State proposal received scores in the Medium Quality Response for Implementation and Quality.</p>	

	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)	
<p></p>	

The evaluation and research plan in this proposal is broad and general. The state provides a description of how it will utilize an independent, nonpartisan research center for determining outcomes and results of the current TQRIS tiers. This evaluation will be used to provide data to inform the leadership and guide decision making for the new, integrated TQRIS. An additional plan is described to contract with an evaluator for the new, integrated TQRIS to provide data for decision making over time. The plans described in the proposal are underdeveloped and non-specific. The state also discusses using other evaluation tools to study the new and integrated TQRIS. Plans to use the results of the current evaluation to guide its plans for the new, integrated TQRIS are included in the narrative. The state has a multi-level, fragmented plan to implement an evaluation of the TQRIS to validate the effectiveness of the new and improved design as well as collecting longitudinal data. A brief discussion of the impact of program quality on Children with High Needs is included in the narrative. This state lists how they will use the results of the evaluation to guide improvements with the end result of improving quality of early learning programs so children and families are positively impacted. The state narrative in this section includes information about how the ECAC and other partner agencies will be involved in advising the evaluation design and implementation for the new, integrated TQRIS. An ambitious timeline of Key Activities is provided to utilize the results of the data collection and guide the work on the new, integrated TQRIS. The 3-month timeline for selection and start-up of the new evaluator may not be realistic for a state-wide system that is not fully formed. The State Plan receives a score in the Medium/High Quality response range.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (c)(1)

The state Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) developed originally in 2003 cover birth to Kindergarten entry and define expectations for knowledge, skills and behaviors for children across all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The narrative states that the ELDS align with the state K-3 academic standards. The narrative describes how the ELDS were updated in 2009 and included an approaches to learning section and identified examples of approaches to learning across development domains: Initiative and Curiosity, Engagement and Persistence, and Reasoning and Problem Solving. In the Spring of 2011 stakeholders revised the ELDS to align with the Core Academic Standards for Math and English Language Arts for use by classroom teachers. The proposal states the ELDS will again be 'reviewed and refined' and will be incorporated into assessments, workforce competencies, and professional development for educators. The State plans to promote the understanding of the ELDS across all types of Early Learning and Development settings to achieve full implementation. Strategic professional development opportunities on the refined ELDS are currently underway

throughout the state and additional events are planned for stakeholders implementing this proposal to ensure wider knowledge, acceptance and implementation of ELDS. The State Plan describes updating and expanding on the ELDS since 2003 and indicates a history of revisions that will allow them to meet the ambitious timeline for completing the work as written in this proposal. More specific information on the status of where the state is in the current revision process would have been helpful. The literacy levels in the ELDS family materials (provided in the Appendix) are too high and may be unreadable for many, and thus inaccessible, especially since the state provided rationale in Section A for low educational levels throughout the state. The State Plan receives a score in the Medium Quality response for Implementation and Quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(2)

The state's development of the Continuous Assessment Guide came out of the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success initiative. The document provides information on screening, diagnostic and classroom/instructional assessments to promote child learning and development, identify children for health and special services, monitor trends and evaluate programs and services, and hold individual children, teachers and schools accountable. However, the purpose of the assessment is for program improvement – not accountability. The state narrative describes plans for updating the Continuous Assessment Guide to reflect revisions to the Early Learning and Development Standards, crosswalks and new information about the common Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Professional development events are planned to provide support for early learning programs and staff in the new and updated TQRIS to align and integrate assessments in all these settings. The State Plan indicates that programs may choose from twelve different assessments which will be challenging for a common database to track and utilize information for statewide program improvements. A detailed description of key activities to increase appropriate administration of assessments and interpretation of assessment data for instruction, programs and services is included in this state plan. The plan addresses training, roles and timelines for implementation. However little information is provided about how the state will address the assessment of infants and toddlers. The State Plan receives a score in the Medium Quality response for Implementation and Quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	14

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(4)

The state includes a description of engaging and supporting families by adding a Center for Community and Family Engagement in the Office of Early Childhood. Points are credited in the TQRIS for parent engagement, parent handbooks, etc. A detailed plan is described with strategies for outreach to parents and families through peer-to-peer mentoring and utilizing existing community partners to assure consistency in messages and information to parents, regardless of the setting. The state also plans to encourage the professional development subgroup of the ECAC to embed high quality family support and engagement strategies in its revised Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the TQRIS. The combination of strategies will advance the goal of a strong partnership between early learning programs and families. Missing in the narrative is a clear plan to include parents and family members as consumers in the planning and implementation of these strategies. Authentic involvement of parents and families as consumers of early learning and development services will provide a rich and rounded perspective. There is little discussion or clarity for engaging family, friend and neighbor care which was identified as a significant group of care providers for children of working families in Kentucky. The State Plan receives a score in the High Quality Plan and Low Quality response for Implementation.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	15

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)

Kentucky developed a common statewide workforce framework called the "Kentucky Early Childhood Professional Development Framework" in 2002 which has guided the credentialing system since that date. High schools, institutions of higher education, regional training centers, child care resource and referral agencies, KY Educational television, and others, coordinate with the Governor's Office to provide professional development opportunities for early learning staff. The progression of credentials aligns with Framework. Brief discussion in the narrative focused on how the framework for professional development encompasses outcomes for children and how it will be revised to include implementation in the new TQRIS. Of particular note is the vocational preparation program for High Schools students to become early learning professionals developed in this state. The Council for Professional Recognition, who awards the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, now allows High School juniors and seniors to obtain the credential before age 18 and without a high school diploma. This allows a fast track to career credentials for this age group and increases the number of qualified workers available to early childhood programs in Kentucky. The state has also developed a Commonwealth Child Care Credential, Director Credential, Trainer Credential, and Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education Certificate for teacher licensure to work in public schools and early intervention settings. This Career Lattice is well developed and ensures a high quality workforce. The state plans to update and revise/refine the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to assure alignment with the new, integrated TQRIS. The ECAC will convene a subgroup to add a Technical Assistance/Coaching Credential that will align with the new integrated TQRIS. The State Plan receives a score in the Medium Quality response for Implementation and Quality.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	15

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

Kentucky currently has an Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) certification program supported with funding from KIDS NOW scholarships coordinated by Professional Development Counselors located in community colleges throughout the state. Two major training registry systems are used in Kentucky. Duplication and access are currently an issue so the state proposal is to create a unified Professional Development Database as a requirement for all trainers in various agencies, organizations and individuals to track training and professional development opportunities. A new addition to the database would be for trainers to track workplace outcomes and training plans based on a prescribed model to increase effective professional development. Publicly reported aggregate data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement and retention was not addressed in this section of the proposal. However, this data may be collected and shared through TQRIS. Although this data is available to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Plan does indicate whether the information is "public." The state plan includes establishing a Center for Professional Development in the Governor's Office to coordinate the spectrum of PD available to early childhood educators and increase the number of well-qualified staff. No increase in number of 'aligned' institutions is planned - currently 29 institutions are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Ambitious increases in Type 1 (Commonwealth Child Care Credential) and Type 3 (Director's Credential) are planned to address the supply and quality of staff to support the new integrated TQRIS expansion. This section does not address incentives for professionals who attain higher levels on the Career Lattice beyond the scholarship programs and without an incentive program for professionals the goals may be difficult to achieve. To assess the effectiveness of the strategies described in the plan, an evaluation component could be incorporated into the TQRIS to track the impact of higher levels of professional development on Children with High Needs.

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	16
<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</p>		

Note: this response has been amended by the reviewer. Due to an inconsistency with the response to Competitive Priority #3, this response has been amended to 10 instead of 16 points. Amended March 20, 2012.

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's plan describes progress toward development of a state regulation for a common Kindergarten entry assessment. The proposal states that a valid and reliable assessment that covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness will be selected through a competitive procurement process and will comply with the requirements of this competition. The selected tool will align with the Early Learning Standards and be administered to children during the first 30 days of their admission into Kindergarten. Plans for training on the Kindergarten assessment will be provided by Early Learning Leadership Networks for school districts and other early learning settings. The key activities, roles and timeline for implementation are comprehensive and include selection of the assessment, statewide professional development on its proper use for those who will administer the tool, and details of the process for collection and analysis of data to guide long-term planning. Key Activity 3 seems incomplete and does not align with other Activities listed. Longitudinal data will be collected and uploaded in to P-20 data system with the Infinite Campus as the point of input for data at the school level. Funding will be supplied by the Department of Education general funds. Overall this approach to putting a statewide Kindergarten entry assessment in place is comprehensive and inclusive of the major components for successful implementation. However the timeline for implementation may not be feasible. The state did not include a description of ways to share local, regional and state data with stakeholders, especially families.

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(2)

This state's application includes 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Systems developed by the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, but does not include all of (a) the Essential Data Elements for a data system per the requirements of this grant. The 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data System did not clearly describe the following: **expulsion rates, staff retention and compensation; Kindergarten Entry Assessment and data or comprehensive TQRIS data.** The application includes all requirements for (b) enabling uniform, data collection by appropriate agencies and programs, (c) facilitating the exchange of data among agencies, (d) generate information that is useful for continuous improvement and decision making and (e) meets Data System Oversight Requirements and state federal and local privacy laws as outlined by the competition. Although not all criteria were met, this state has made progress toward planning and implementation of a comprehensive data collection system.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	204

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	3

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The State intends to recruit programs that serve three or more unrelated children into the TQRIS system. This number does not comply with the requirement of 'two or more unrelated children for a fee' of this competition. The State also plans to 'invite' all Early Learning and Development programs to participate in TQRIS which may increase the number of Children with High Needs who are impacted however, the State does not detail how ALL regulated programs will be included as specified in the criteria.

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)

Kentucky does not have a standard Kindergarten Entry Assessment currently in place that meets selection criteria. The proposal addressed selection criteria (E)(1) and earned a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points for that criterion.

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 Kentucky application does not comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build an effective Early Childhood Learning and Development system by aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and implementing a TQRIS to increase the quality of Early Learning and Development programs for ALL Children with High Needs. A currently implemented Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criteria (E)(1)(b) is not in place. The State Plan also does not comply with specific expectations for measuring outcomes and progress. The narrative identifies the Northern Kentucky Early Childhood Data System as the Best practice regional model for a statewide system in Table (A)(1-13), however the P-20 Data Collaborative is identified as the system the proposal plans to strengthen and utilize for a statewide data system. Additionally the state's plan to increase school readiness starts with children ages 3 and older. This does not comply with the requirement to include ALL children in the state - including infants and toddlers. Current brain research informs us that the most effective time to maximize intervention to prepare children for school readiness is during the period from pregnancy to age 3. The state identified that 90,577 children, or 53.1% of all children, from birth through age 3 are in low income families (Table (A)(1)-1) however, there is little focus on this population in the proposal. English Language Learners are identified as a high need group (7.1% of children) however few specific strategies to support children or families are identified in the proposal. The proposal lacks specific strategies for state systems, family engagement, or children to address this high need group.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # KY-5014

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 3:32 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, 15

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)

To demonstrate a state commitment and investment in supporting their early learning and development system (hereafter referred to as ELDS), the applicants presented narrative information documenting their history in the field with accompanying mandatory tables (Tables (A)(1) through (A)(13). Legislatively they have often been one of the leading states to promote early learning programs across the nation. Moreover, a recent Governor's Task Force was implemented to upgrade and enhance their early learning programs. During the last several years, in spite of the economic downturn nationally, Kentucky has been able to maintain the numbers of high needs children served [from 126,049 (2007) to 126,128 (2010)]. Similar to many states, during this same period, total state funding decreased from \$228 Million to \$187 Million. Hence, Kentucky is presently serving about 72% of their young high needs children in state or federally funded early learning programs, which is a sizable number. It should be noted that many states have experienced decrease funding for early learning programs. In addition, they have several statewide initiatives in KIDS NOW and local initiatives that enhance their early learning programs (e.g., HANDS a voluntary home visiting program for new parents, an Early Childhood Mental Health Program, establishment of a TQRIS) and local initiatives (e.g., Madison County actively engaging early childhood practitioners and programs in an effort to align school readiness expectations, blended local preschools with state-funded preschools). The applicants presented information concerning "Key Building Blocks in Kentucky's ELDS" which includes early learning standards, professional development for early childhood practitioners, and STARS for KIDS NOW a TQRIS. In this reviewer's professional judgment, Kentucky has demonstrated their commitment to young children's early learning programs. Hence, the reviewer awarded 15 points.

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 10

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 applicants provided a general discussion of what their reform efforts might be for improving program quality, child outcomes for children with high needs, and decreasing the achievement gap for many children early in life. Although they provided a schematic depicting several critical components of a statewide system, they failed to explain and elaborate on how those essential components of the ELDS drive reform and alter statewide or day-to-day policies and practices in early childhood settings. In addition, how the Governor's Office on Early Childhood and Early Childhood Advisory Council as well as local councils would promote needed changes and continuous improvement with well-specified program goals and well-developed feedback mechanisms remained ambiguous. Within this subsection, the applicants failed to develop and delineate specific statewide program goals that can be measured across time (formative evaluation) and at the end of a project period (summative evaluation) to determine progress during and after implementation. As important, given the lack of more frequent feedback mechanisms, it is doubtful that when changes in reform efforts need adjustment that that the those changes can be made in a timely manner. The State's plan is too general to drive a focused reform movement between and across the state and local levels. In addition, the brief discussion for Measuring Outcomes and Progress depends on a yet to be determined Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is not clearly linked with other critical dimensions of the statewide policies and practices (e.g., professional development, family engagement, functional early learning standards). Therefore, the proposed reform steps will probably not serve as "the ultimate benchmark measure for the State's entire Early Learning and Development (ELD) system." Moreover, annual improvement rates of 50% for kindergarten readiness is overly ambitious and not well justified by child change scores in the existing early intervention and prevention literature. In summary, the interim and process steps needed to push reform across multiple critical systems components to and from regional and local programs is not well specified and heavily dependent on an overly ambitious "transformed TQRIS" (i.e., 100% participation) and kindergarten entry assessment. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the Kentucky RTT-ELC proposal only partially addressed this criterion.

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

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

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

- (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
- (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
- (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
- (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

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

- (1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State

Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicants provided an organizational chart and accompanying MOUs that cover participation and work scope of their proposed efforts. The organizational chart indicates that the Office of Early Childhood will function as the Lead Agency for the RTT-ELC and that it relates to the Early Childhood Advisory Council appointed by the Governor and directly to the Governor. In addition, the organizational chart shows two important cabinet level agencies with critical early childhood and family services subsumed under their direction (i.e., Health and Family Services, Education and Workforce Development, which includes the Kentucky Department of Education) and those cabinet level agencies and departments answering to the Governor. The Governor's charge to make the Office of Early Childhood the focus and the mechanism of collaboration and support for cross sector early childhood programs will be most helpful in promoting interagency work and cooperation. This should expedite decision-making and support sharing of information and resources. The proposed strategic planning and implementation role of the Office of Early Childhood is also beneficial for enhancing statewide early learning program services and should make inter-agency collaboration smoother and more timely. Governance roles and responsibilities are well laid out in tabular form (Tables (A)(3)-1 and 2. In addition, a number of statewide and local providers or administrators strongly endorsed the proposed plan with letters of intent or support and have agreed to work with the Office of Early Childhood to implement future initiatives. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the state has been very responsive to this criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded 10 points.

	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 applicants are requesting \$60,000,000 allowable request from the RTT-ELC competition (Table 1-1 Budget Summary by Budget Category). In addition, they plan to use about \$70,000,000 in state funds across four years to support their plan. They plan to obtain those monies from four sources (i.e., Tobacco Master Settlement, CCDF Funds, Department of Education Funds, and undetermined future funds). They did not clarify if these funding streams were common allocations of money (IDEA, Title I). For example, Table (A)(4)-1 does not include funding streams that clearly support high needs children, especially children with IFSPs, IEPs, and English Language Learners and who should be well integrated into any state plan to enhance services for young high needs children and their families. One might assume some of the Department of Education monies might be those dollars. Hence, alignment of existing funds and RTT-ELC requested funds was at times difficult to determine. The budget narrative includes request for \$60,000,000 to implement 6 Projects: (a) Build System Capacity (\$12,969,800 RTT-ELC funding); (b) Create a New and Integrated TQRIS (\$40,472,220 RTT-ELC funding); (c) Revise Early Learning Standards; (d) Create Comprehensive Assessment Systems (\$5,988,300 RTT-ELC funding); (e) Create Centralized Professional Development System \$2,898,780 RTT-ELC funding); (f) Build Early Learning Data Systems (\$2,878,400). The vast majority of requested RTT-ELC funds are dedicated to establishing (enhancing) a new TQRIS system with additional funding for the Comprehensive Kindergarten Assessment System. Some costs appear reasonable and aligned with the applicants' overall plans, at least at the overall project level. Nevertheless, three primary concerns arise. First, why \$10,580,240 is allocated under the "Other Category" on Budget Table 1-1 is unclear. Moreover, the subsequent tables by project and agency with accompanying narrative and information do not clearly explain how this large amount will be spent. Second, spending \$12,969,800 to enhance the ECAC, Community Early Childhood Councils, and as discretionary funds is not innovative and unlikely to focus on statewide target systems change (e.g., TQRIS, Comprehensive Assessment). Unless the local grant monies are tied to well specified systems change initiatives it will not necessarily be aligned with the overall goals of RTT-ELC with cross agency collaboration and integration of early learning programs at the local level. In addition, the budgeted funds were overly allocated to the TQRIS. Finally, the applicants did not indicate how RTT-ELC significant investments will be sustained after the 4-year funding period other than to say the state will take them over. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the budget information provided was only partially responsive to this subsection. Hence, the reviewer gave 8 points.

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 State has had a quality rating system for 10 years. Nevertheless, as they noted it is limited at this time and only 1 of 4 child care programs are in its top two tiers and it is not linked to licensing. The State's basic plan is to update and upgrade Early Learning Standards, include standards for screenings, formative assessments of child learning, and teacher-child interactions (investigate the CLASS Assessment). They also plan to enhance educator effectiveness by requiring top tier program to have only lead teachers with Bachelor's degrees. The literature on bachelor's degrees versus 2 year degrees or high quality professional development is mixed and ongoing training versus degrees appears to be the essential element. They also want to crosswalk standards and align them with state pre-kindergarten programs and Head Start. Finally, they do plan to link the enhanced TQRIS with licensure. They briefly discuss how they will enhance other important components of a high-quality TQRIS such as family engagement strategies, early learning standards, health promotion practices, comprehensive assessment system, and effective data practices and then referred readers to other parts of the proposal. This part of the subsection

was very general. They plan to enhance and implement future TQRIS system enhancements with a small work group from the ECAC that consists of Department of Education, Head Start, Division of Child Care Personnel, along with consultants with expertise in several high needs areas (e.g., English Language Learners). Overall, the plan is very general and a "top down approach" to systems change (although at a later stage of the proposal they suggest they will include many more state stakeholders). In addition, the applicants plan to embed current licensing requirements into the enhance quality rating system at its lowest tier. What is much less clear is exactly how this proposed systems change will result in progress up the tiers, beyond basic licensing and how a small work group can effectively plan for a statewide collaborative system based on a continuous improvement model. In this reviewer's professional judgment the applicants have only partially addressed adopting a high quality TQRIS. Hence, the reviewer awarded them 5 points.

	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)

To date, the State has implemented policies that have resulted in 40% of their childcare programs participating in some level of the STARS program and 80% of those serve some high needs children. In addition, 20% of Head Start programs are in the STARS system. The applicants note that they believe this is the result of past state financial incentives to serve high needs children. Nevertheless, they did not present evidence of why Head Start or the other childcare programs were in the STARS system. Information is disseminated to parents through usual means (e.g., Child Care and Resource and Referral Agencies, Community Early Childhood Councils) and was not particularly innovative. Policies and practices related to assisting more high needs families in obtaining high quality learning programs were not presented in this subsection. The State plan revolves around (a) moving all child care programs that are licensed into a TQRIS system, and (b) bringing in other early learning programs into the system by only monitoring TQRIS standards not currently on the other early learning programs present standards (e.g., Head Start Standards cover Head Start programs and only separate State TQRIS rated). Two significant concerns arise over this "plan to integrate early learning programs" into the TQRIS. First, the placement of all licensed childcare programs into Tier 1 appears to be simply an administrative fiat that may place more programs at the lowest tier but it does not explicitly plan for nor promote movement up to higher quality tiers. Secondly, and more importantly, the strategy of using other early childhood program standards and then only rating the State standards that are different does not integrate the systems but continues to separate them. This is not necessarily efficient and is not congruent with the overarching concept of integration of early childhood standards and services across early learning and development programs. Although the state's plan is ambitious, it does not comport with placing early learning programs in a system that will promote continuous improvement. In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants have not been responsive to planning for a system that will integrate early learning programs into a state TQRIS beyond administratively placing those programs in the lowest tier of their current system. Hence, the reviewer awarded them 8 points.

	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)

Kentucky has partially implemented components of program monitoring and rating using ECERS, which is a well-known and psychometrically valid environmental rating scale for childcare programs and state funded preschools. In addition, similar to other States some Kentucky Head Start programs are piloting the CLASS rating scale. The applicants have also implemented initial training and subsequent checks on interrater agreement for the ECERS measures that seem reasonable. Nevertheless, the applicants plan to enhance the existing system for childcare centers and other early learning programs is based on planning groups and a very general discussion of future expansion. For example, the applicants discuss using "Classrooms of Excellence," on-site consultations, mentoring, conference presentations, but none of these activities are elaborated or detailed with specific activities. Particularly confusing is the fact that the applicants' plan for TQRIS expansion is essentially to bring early learning and development programs across time into the current licensing system that aligns with Level 1 of the quality rating system and then make a statement "TQRIS raters will be separate from program monitoring processes." The applicants plan to update and use parental focus groups and other consumers to review potential information on Kentucky's early learning and development programs is reasonable to determine a level of quality and consumer satisfaction. Nevertheless, their plan for dissemination of information is basically based on a public website. Their overall plan for rating their TQRIS is to investigate research-based tools in addition to their use of ECERS and Head Start's use of CLASS. The use of the ECERS as the primary monitoring tool without further specification of a measurement system for the overall TQRIS is a weakness in this subsection. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were only partially responsive to this criterion and did not develop a high quality plan for developing rating and monitoring of early learning programs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicants discussed existing programs in early learning and development programs (e.g., "Classrooms of Excellence," Head Start Summer Institute, financial incentives for enrolling high needs children in childcare and for achievement of quality measures). Nevertheless, in many cases these activities are similar to existing programs in other states and not particularly innovative. For example, the existing professional development is differentiated in the narrative by state-funded preschools, Head Start, and childcare centers and not well integrated. The applicants do not develop a high-quality plan to integrate professional development and only discuss current financial incentives and rewards for entering the TQRIS. Although they mentioned "a particular focus on high needs children" their narrative switches to a general discussion of TQRIS and not how high needs children and families will be brought systematically into early learning programs. Professional development activities, other than the

mention of TQRIS training, especially those related to high quality programs for high needs children and families were not well specified. Given the lack of specificity in how professional development will support practitioners and programs in continuous improvement in moving up tiers it is difficult to determine how the applicants decided on their performance objectives for programs and high needs children (e.g., 52% children in state funded preschools, 52% children in Head Start, 53% infants and toddlers in Part C, 17% of children in CCDF programs). Again, the primary policy driving the anticipated changes in numbers of programs and children in the proposed TQRIS system is the change of licensure to Tier 1 of the proposed TQRIS without a well specified plan for enrollment of high needs children and movement of their programs to higher quality tiers. The specifics about how to provide the kinds of professional and financial supports that drive enrolling early learning programs in TQRIS were simply not forthcoming in this subsection and the reviewer was referred to a later subsection for any level of detail. In addition, the administrative and legislative actions that are necessary for that to happen are not discussed. The applicants proposed plan for supporting working families with high needs is very general. In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants have only been partially responsive to the criterion in this subsection. Hence, the reviewer awarded 10 points.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	8

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 applicants' proposal for evaluating the effectiveness of their proposed TQRIS is underdeveloped. Simply noting that there is an ongoing STARS evaluation without providing information from that evaluation is not sufficient. Moreover, the general plan for external evaluators to be contracted to perform an evaluation with "research-based" measures is not sufficient to planning and implementing a meaningful evaluation of an enhanced statewide TQRIS systems change. For example, troubling is the statement that the applicants made "Similar to the evaluation design for the current STARS evaluation, Kentucky will select research-based measures, relying on the expertise of the external evaluators we will work with." The information on the current evaluation should be available, at least the measures used. The evaluation of an integrative statewide early childhood learning systems change initiative will be best driven by informed stakeholders in the state system with consultation from external evaluators. Over reliance on outside expertise to implement an evaluation without a meaningful and well specified state plan will not achieve a satisfactory evaluation of any systems changes. This section lacked the kind of specificity needed for a thoughtful evaluation of a TQRIS. In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were not very responsive to the criterion on validating a TQRIS system, especially given that they have had one in existence for 10 years. Hence, the reviewer awarded 8 points.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
--	-----------	-------

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

20

13

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(1)

The state has developed (2003) and recently revised (2009) their Early Learning and Development Standards. Similar to many state standards the standards were developed by individuals and reviewed by state and one national expert. Within their narrative, the applicants discussed the development to date. With respect to plans, they noted that they will re-review the Early Learning Standards as informed by a new readiness definition established by the Governor's Early Childhood Task Force. They then plan to work toward aligning the revised standards with Head Start Standards and other early learning standards. In addition, they want to align the revised standards with the Next Generation Science Standards. They plan to integrate the revised Standards across the TQRIS, their Comprehensive Assessment System, and professional development for early childhood educators. Although Kentucky has made progress on refining their early learning standards and applicants have a plan to integrate those standards into systems components (e.g., TQRIS, professional development system, families receiving services) the plan is general and beyond expert review does not include evidence or a planned process to indicate how well the revised standards are integrated and diffused to critical systems components (e.g., early childhood educators, families receiving services, Head Start programs participating in the revised standards, vertical alignment with K-3 standards). In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were partially responsive to this criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded them 13 points.

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.

Available

20

Score

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)

The applicants noted that they have systems in place to support the use of multiple assessments and discussed those systems. Nevertheless, their plan to strengthen early childhood educators understanding of assessment processes, articulation of a systematic approach to align and integrate assessments and resultant information, and specific goals for training early childhood educators on appropriate assessments to inform instruction and early childhood services is very general. A high-quality plan to select assessments and assessment approaches was not clear and forthcoming in this subsection. The activities appear to be a recycling of past efforts, which many states have already performed to varying degrees, with a kindergarten entry assessment added. In reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were only partially responsive to the criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded 10 points.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (C)(4)

The applicants discussed several existing state structures and entities that promote family engagement and support for families and their progress to date. The state's proposed plan focuses primarily on establishing a Center of Community and Family Engagement in the Office of Early Childhood. Then this new entity will work with existing groups (e.g., Early Childhood Advisory Council, Early Childhood Councils). They also plan to enhance professional development around family engagement and support through revised Core Content and Competencies and the Existing Center for Professional Development. It is unclear how establishing a center in a statewide office constitutes a meaningful plan that will result in the kinds of culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of children with high needs in regions or local areas across the state. Moreover, the applicants' did not make a compelling argument for how the new center will promote family engagement with high needs families. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were only partially responsive to this criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded 12 points.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicants discussed and showed evidence of an existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (Early Childhood Professional Development Framework in Appendix) with several types of credentials for early childhood personnel. Their present system is relatively well developed. They also discussed revising current documents and processes but not with any specifics about what needed to be done or what could be done. Their plan submitted in this subsection is essentially a call for additional unspecified planning through existing statewide structures. Therefore, the plan in this subsection was general. In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were responsive to this category. Hence, the reviewer awarded 16 points.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

The applicants have established a system to support professional development to improve early childhood educators' knowledge, skills, and abilities with professional development counselors and Professional Growth Plans. Their existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework covers credentialing and training in both areas of non-degree and degree programs. A scholarship program exists with \$1,000,000 to promote and assist personnel in accessing training opportunities. The majority of scholars are enrolled in 2-year institutions to obtain appropriate credentials. This is appropriate given that many child care employees, Head Start teachers, and assistant teachers may need that credential and training. The applicants' basic plan is to create a Center for Professional Development in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. In addition, they plan to unify two existing databases within one database for planning and implementing professional development activities by making it part of licensure. The integration of the existing redundant (or potentially redundant) databases is very appropriate for RTT-ELC in that it may make an important aspect of professional development common for trainees across different early learning programs. On-going year-long training institutes were proposed as a mechanism to expand the number of early childhood educators. The applicants' notion of Community Early Learning Leadership Networks is a good one and seems to align with a "community of practice" framework that is often used to promote professional development across time and programs. Moreover, the inclusion of others in the community other than a single sector of early childhood educators is a sound one for promoting collaboration and professional growth. Nevertheless, it is less clear how establishing a Center for Professional Development in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood will promote enhanced access or incentives beyond the present system. The applicants' performance measures appear reasonable. In this reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants were responsive to this criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded 16 points.

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	16

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 applicants have begun the process to select and implement a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment and it is under review by the Kentucky Board of Education. Indeed, the Kentucky Department of Education has set aside funding to implement the assessment and they have acknowledged those funds cannot be RTT-ELC funds. Although it is difficult to assess validity, reliability, and appropriateness (e.g., language, administration time needed, how it is administered) of a yet to be named assessment the applicants are making an effort to address those issues with use of quality indicators from the National Research Council. They address initial professional development for the selected assessment and will integrate assessment results into their P-20 system. Finally, the state Department of Education is beginning to develop regulations to promote alignment of the Kindergarten Assessment with school readiness and Kentucky's early learning standards. In the reviewer's professional judgment, the applicants are responsive to this criterion. Hence, the reviewer awarded 16 points.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	18

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 applicants have delineated the 10 essential elements of a data system and they are working to integrate newly acquired early childhood data (e.g., child level, program level, teacher, assessment). Given that they are integrating future data into their existing state P-20 that should allow for information exchange and compliance with applicable laws for privacy. Although the applicants discussed provider access to selected data for individual children the details were not forthcoming. Again, use of the P-20 allows for employment of existing entities for data collection, storage, and access and may facilitate at least vertical alignment of much needed information.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	183

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
--	-----------	-------

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----	---

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

Although it seems that the inclusion of early learning programs into the TQRIS is by administrative fiat, that is one way of assuring that unregulated services are at least monitored with existing licensure standards. Moreover, if funded the State does plan to use significant amounts of the allocations for refinement and initial support of an enhanced TQRIS. What remains unclear from the applicants' discussion of moving more early learning programs into the licensing system is how that will promote a continuous improvement model and most importantly upward movement along the tiers to higher quality early learning programs.

Priorities

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

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 moving toward implementing a kindergarten entry assessment that will be useful in enhancing early childhood policies and practices. Hence, they meet this priority.

Absolute Priority

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

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

Kentucky has been developing early learning programs for a number of years. Their RTT-ELC application partially addressed many of the specified criteria for funding. Recent efforts and plans in this proposal included strategies that may lead to better alignment of early childhood learning and development programs. At times on some of the criteria in the application, the applicants' plans were not sufficiently detailed or relied too much on establishing planning mechanisms without well specified plans in the proposal. More emphasis and detail concerning validating the proposed TQRIS system was much needed, especially given that over \$40,000,000 was to be allocated to that effort. In addition, the allocation of over \$12,000,000 to local councils without well targeted initiatives that align directly with planned systems change was not forthcoming in the proposal. Without targeted initiatives directly related to systems change efforts the devolution of funds is not very compelling and not very innovative. Indeed, this strategy has been tried in multiple states without clear impact, especially for children with high needs. Although detail was not always forthcoming, the infrastructure of early learning and development programs was evident and can be used to build on existing services and state collaboration. If the applicants' proposal were funded by the collaborating federal agencies, the reviewer's professional opinion is that the State's early learning and development programs will better integrate policies and practices and improve the quality of participating early learning and development programs. This should result in a system that promotes better child outcomes for high needs children.