



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MD-5016

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

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) regarding financial investment, participation numbers, and legislative practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

This applicant clearly demonstrates a strong financial investment in early learning and development programs. Currently Maryland exceeds and has increased its state match for funds to CCDF as indicated in table (a) (1) (4) in the estimated amount of \$12,782,732 for 2011. Funding for those enrolled in public pre-k increased by \$900 per child from 2007 to 2010. The budget for the Division of Early Childhood Development increased by 12%, from \$118.5 million in school finance year 2007 to \$133.1 million in school finance year 2011. The amount of funding allocated appears to be reasonable in relationship to the size of Maryland's population of children with high needs. Legislation in 2002 revised Maryland's Educational financial structure to include low income preschool children in their funding formula of the base and compensation funding for 2 students. The quality of the financial investment by the state is high.---The applicant clearly supports increasing the number of children with high needs participating in early learning and development programs. Evidence provided indicates that Maryland provides 1/2 day preschool (Bridge to Excellence) to all 4 year olds who qualify financially, which translates into 27,071 children currently in the state preschool program. The applicant provided numbers for all the programs but indicated that they could not provide a grand total because of duplicate counts from participating in multiple programs. For example, the number of children ages 3 until kindergarten entry receiving services exceeds the number of children from low income families by age in table (a) (1)(1). Keeping in mind the duplicate numbers, the state still has impressive statistics when looking at their increasing numbers of children with high needs engaged in early learning and development programs. The number of children with high needs receiving services for all early education programs increased from 56,214 in 2007 to 70,209 in 2010.(table A 1 5). --The State presents a clear case of historical legislation, policy, and practices that support early learning in their state. Seventeen key pieces of legislature and policies were enacted from 1999 to 2010. 1999 was the year that school readiness was part of the reform initiate for the Legislative Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families. HB932 passed in 2005 mandated the housing of all childcare/early childhood programs under the Maryland Department of Education. All early childhood programs, including licensing and CCDF reside under the Maryland Department of Education. In 2007 the Task Force on Universal Preschool and funding for the State's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project was established. ---Maryland is fully implementing each of the components that form

the building blocks of a high quality early learning and development system. Early Learning Standards were developed in 2003-2004 for the State prek-8 standards, indicators and objectives. Maryland is on its second generation of guidelines for birth–three. Healthy Beginnings, published in December 2010, is the current document. --Elements of a comprehensive assessment are implemented in most publically funded early childhood programs. Measures of environmental quality and quality of adult-child interactions are not required in Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA) Part B programs. Formative assessments are not required in Title I programs. Screening measures are required as part of state licensing but not formative assessments, measures of environmental quality or adult-child interactions. Children entering into licensed care must have a health inventory signed by a physician that reviews vision, hearing, general health, physical health or impairment, speech/language, allergies, modified diet or special feeding needs, mental/emotional/behavioral/ or any other condition that might limit a child's participation in child care activities, with a plan to expand in the next three years to include for developmental and learning needs, behavioral health and oral health. The applicant indicated that there is no statewide requirement for family engagement. Judy Centers Partnerships and Head Start are required to develop and implement family engagement practices. Maryland has had a Child Care Credentialing Program since 2001. Staff levels progress to level 6 and administrative has levels 1-4. Incentives exist for the workforce to encourage progression. A Workforce Competency Framework exists that identifies competencies for working with young children. Portfolio assessments are required to be completed in November of the kindergarten year. Ratings for each indicator are submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education and aggregated to determine if the children are Fully Ready, Approaching Ready or Developing Readiness. Two data systems exist which provide information on young children. One is the Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) and the other is the Maryland Longitudinal Data System. The applicant demonstrated that it clearly has a current system that is of high quality.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state presented a convincing case for their comprehensive early learning and developmental reform agenda that is of high quality and will increase access for children of high needs. It appears ambitious and based on the data presented has a high probability of success. The proposal contains innovative practices which make it an interesting application. These practices include locating family centers in libraries and training local pediatricians on mental health issues. Goals for the state include the following: By the year 2015, 88% of all children from low income families will enter kindergarten "fully ready", 80% of all English Language Learners will enter kindergarten "fully ready", and 70% of all children with disabilities will enter kindergarten "fully ready". The State provided projections that indicated that with their present structure, programs and policies, they would be able to narrow the readiness gap for children of low wealth but not English Language Learners or children with disabilities. Projects proposed to narrow the gap are: establishing local early childhood councils, implementing Maryland EXCELS (TORIS), Quality Capacity Building, Promoting use of High Quality Early Learning Standards, Professional Development for early learning standards, Comprehensive Assessment, Child Development Innovations, family engagement and Support, Leadership in Early Learning Academy, and Early Data System. Maryland chose to address all of the focused investment areas. All were selected because the State believes that the relationship between each is imperative to develop a comprehensive plan that makes a significant difference in developing high quality early learning and development programs with increased access for all high needs children. The applicant indicated that Kindergarten Outcomes are supported by the implementation of early learning standards through an improved workforce, programs undergoing continued improvement, and an enhanced information system for policy development and program improvement. A professional development agenda goal that does not appear to be robust enough to achieve the desired results for the target audience was the Leadership Learning Academy. A one day training with a half day follow up does not appear to be of enough intensity to facilitate growth in the items on the agenda as outlined for these learners.

	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)

The State appears to have fully met the criteria of having commitment by stakeholders and aligning early learning across the state. Maryland appears unique in that all agencies related to early childhood are housed under the Maryland Department of Education. The plan included an organizational chart which indicated that the governing division for the grant would be the Division of Early Childhood. Maryland has streamlined some portions of interagency agreements by providing that services that serve young children all reside in the Maryland State Department of Education, including public libraries and nutrition programs. The State Department of Education governs operational policies and procedures. The applicant indicated that policy would reside with the Maryland State Board of Education. The flow chart presented in the application showed a clear connection between Maryland State Board of Education, Maryland State Department of Education, Governor's Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, Children's Cabinet and Governor's Office for Children, all reporting to the Governor's Office. The State pledges that they will work closely with all agencies and stakeholders to sustain the grant beyond 2015. The applicant proposes to create 24 separate local early childhood advisory councils. Letters of support provided details on how the stakeholders pledged to support the plan in their agency, library, university, school, or early learning organization. The applicant indicated that sustainability would be assisted by having the grant budget as part of the State budget. How this would add to the sustainability of activities after the grant was not well defined. The plan proposed inclusion of stakeholders through focus groups and open meetings. The applicant indicated that disputes will be resolved by the Early Childhood Advisory Council using their procedures and by laws that were provided in the appendix A.3.1. However, the Bylaws of the Maryland State Advisory Council on Early Childhood failed to include any section that addressed dispute resolution procedures. The scope of work provided matched the goals outlined in the plan as well as providing the required signatures. The State's response is of high quality, mostly implemented.

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

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)

This funding plan appears to be high quality. The funding plan presented is likely to support the activities described in the State plan and includes costs that are necessary and reasonable to the plan. Throughout the application and in the budget narrative, the applicant addresses how the grant activities will be sustained when the grant is finished. Letters of support indicate what they would do to sustain the work of the grant. The applicant addresses how funds will be leveraged in table (A) (4)-1 and directly addresses in their plan how their projects will be sustained. As an example, the Comprehensive Assessment System will be funded using state funds. The Early Learning Data system will be maintained by CCDF. The Comprehensive Assessment System will be maintained by state funds. This is not an all-inclusive list of the information provided. One area of concern was that the Leadership Learning Academy was not continued after the grant. This would be important to continue in order to sustain early childhood educator's understanding of what components provide a high quality program and how to implement the strategies. The information provided indicated that the State has a well-conceived funding plan that looks beyond the life of the grant to increase opportunities for high needs students to access high quality early learning programs.

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 State has a fully implemented, high quality tiered quality rating and improvement system that has been in place since 2001 and revised in 2009. It is presently in its pilot stage. It is based on early learning standards. This is evidenced by MSDE working with the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center to ensure that the EXCELLS standards align to nationally accepted criteria for QRIS. A comprehensive assessment system is not built into the TQRIS at the center level but is at the school age level. Early childhood educator credentialing requirements are built into the TQRIS and are progressive, moving from credential level 2 at tier 2 to credential level 4 or higher at tier 5. The Early Childhood Educator qualifications and the progression of skills tied to financial incentives are outstanding. Health promotion is strong in the TQRIS starting with 45 day screenings starting at level 1, across all programs, with timelines for successive screenings. The requirement for a health check by a doctor to enroll in school would address vision and hearing but there is no provision for dental checks in the TQRIS. Family engagement strategies are weak as described in the TQRIS document. They appear to focus more on progression of what should be in a handbook than fully describing expectations for family engagement. The TQRIS did require increasing activities of family engagement, moving from one activity to adding an additional activity at each successive level. This section referenced the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for ideas of what to implement. The Early Childhood Data Collection System with linkages to the Maryland Longitudinal Data System is used to capture data about Early Childhood Programs, including data from the TQRIS. Level 1 is linked with the State licensing system.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	13

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 applicant has a well-conceived quality plan to increase the number of high needs children in high quality programs. Recruitment has already started to increase involvement in the Maryland EXCELLS (TQRIS). This was evidenced by notifications sent to forty five programs in October 2011. All State funded preschools will be required to participate fully by December 15, 2015. The state indicated that effective policies and practices exist that will make this happen but does not give in depth information on what those policies and practices look like that will promote the participation. Involvement for day care centers is tied to increase Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement; those at higher levels receive better reimbursements. The current baseline indicates that 2% of the programs are participating in the TQRIS which indicates partial implementation at this time. The state goal is that by December 31, 2015, 27% of all learning and development programs, including all publically funded programs, will be participating in Maryland EXCELLS. The goal of moving from 2% of the programs participating in the TQRIS to 27% in four years is definitely ambitious. The strategy they propose to use to help more families afford high quality care is to continue with subsidies and increase marketing so that parents choose high quality programs. Parents that choose high quality programs which will reduce their co-pay and increase their take home income. The state proposes the continuance of ½ day public preschool for high needs 4 year olds. The plan presented is convincing that it is of high quality but only partially implemented.

	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)

Quality and implementation for rating and monitoring was medium quality, partially implemented. The provision of self-assessment up to level 3 without outside monitoring would suggest that some variability in quality and implementation would be likely to exist below level 4. Reliability would not be consistent and would depend on the skills of the person in the center in self-monitoring using the required ERS tool. More clarity in the description of this process was needed as in one area it mentioned a self-assessment and in another it described a licensing specialist that would look during licensing (sometime during a 12 month period) to see if what was reported on-line matched what was seen in the center. It is not clear how this would assist centers in delivering high quality programs. At level 4 a trained outside evaluator would monitor. It was not clear why this would happen at level 4 but not earlier. There was no information given as to monitor credentials or the training required to indicate that inter-rater reliability would provide for effective implementation. The applicant described three levels of monitoring. The first level would be done within the licensing visit. During her visit, the Specialist will validate that the information reported from the self-assessment meets criteria. At the second level, the Specialist makes a referral to the EXCELS technical assistance network, which then conducts an on-site review of the documentation, makes recommendations for improvement and establishes a plan for quality capacity building. The third level of monitoring would be conducted by EXCELS monitors using a rubric (but not actual site visit) to evaluate what was submitted at random. The applicant indicated that the program would receive a certificate and that there will be two areas on the web where this information would be made available to families. There was no mention if health and safety violations would be available at the portal. Information presented was not convincing that the self-evaluations required at level 3 with minimal on site time would be effective in monitoring for high quality. They did indicate that at level 4, programs would be assessed by a trained outside evaluator who had training and has achieved reliability. No further information was provided.

	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)

The applicant appears to propose a medium quality reponse and partial implementation based on present practices, expansion and development of innovative practices. The plan provides for identifying programs, building capacity of programs and incentives for programs. The applicant indicates that incentives for increasing levels on the TQRIS for centers and going to a higher TQRIS levels are in place. Centers would receive an increase in funds and families would receive a higher level of co-pay for children enrolled at high quality early learning programs. No other incentives were indicated. The applicant indicates that a Task Force will be established on "Improving Early Learning for Children from Low Income and Disadvantaged Environments". The stated goal of their task force will be to address the needs of families in choosing high quality child care options and to increase level of information about resources and options. The applicant indicates that the current TQRIS is being implemented as a pilot in a limited number of programs but also talks about the differentiated reimbursement that is implemented with a previous TQRIS. The applicant indicated that higher tiers would indicate increasing funds, both for children and staff. The applicant described a Hub which is as a full service center for families to include parent education, adult education, resource referrals, and drop in services 24 hour a day 5 days a week. There was no information regarding whether transportation was supported. It was not indicated if there were full day preschool programs (other than centers) that were full year. The state preschool programs are for four year olds and were not full day programs. The applicant did not present evidence that there was a plan to address this need. The targets presented were ambitious. Currently no programs are in the top Tier. The goal for year 4 is that approximately 1/3 of the target 3,097 programs will be in the top 2 tiers. Missing were targets for IDEA programs and Title 1 programs [table(B)(4)(c)(2)]. An earlier table [(B)(4)(c)(1)] indicated that the target of all programs would be 929 but given the second table, detail on what programs are being targeted would assist in understanding the State plan. While IDEA and Title I preschools may vary in number according to eligibility requirements, lack of targets for these children with high needs does not give a complete picture of the aspirations of the State for all children. Not including targets for Title 1 and IDEA identified children/programs did not complete the picture of goals for all programs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The plan for validating the Maryland EXCELS TQRIS addresses the criteria required and appears to be one of high quality. The proposed study outlined in the State plan includes focusing on the progression of levels to determine if they contribute to developing quality early learning programs. The State will work with Ohio in a cross state study and a multi-state INQUIRE QRIS consortium which will collect data at three levels: program, classroom and child. They will use a full sample that includes all programs participating and a sub sample which will be used for validation. The information does not provide convincing information that the validation proposed will yield the information desired. All programs are not required to participate at the same level, which would generate different results. An example of this is tier 5, where public programs would be required to do CLASS but not private early childhood programs. The variables would make it difficult to compare and validate the levels in the TQRIS. The plan described methodology which included observation, parent and teacher surveys, administering the CLASS both in classrooms and in the home (CLASS Toddler). Finally, children will be followed longitudinally through the Early Childhood Warehouse and the Maryland Longitudinal Data system to assess the impact the TQRIS has had at Kindergarten and beyond.

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.	15	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 presented information that indicated the present standards are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate across age groups. The standards were developed using work groups composed of child psychology, early intervention and dual language learners. Aligned to the standards is a curriculum (VIOLETS) which targets vocabulary development through stories specifically targeting English Language Learners, demonstrating the consideration of developing linguistic appropriate programs for young children. The standards met criteria of addressing all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The state regulations mandate that all subjects are aligned Pre-K-8. The State presented evidence that standards are incorporated into program standards, curriculum, Workforce Knowledge and Competency. MSDE has compiled a list of curricula that can be used by their varied programs and is aligned to the standards. The applicant indicates that it has professional development supports in place for all public preschools, licensed child care and Head Start programs. Included was a list of the professional development and program components. The State indicated that they plan to expand the Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR) training to more licensed day care and Head Start programs starting in 2012. It is not clear if the training was offered and there was a need for recruitment, or if only specific areas were offered the training previously, since they are planning to expand the training. The plan does indicate that once the revised standards are completed, there will be four day training on the standards. The present standards appear to be high quality and woven through all components and expanded to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). The plan appears to be substantially implemented and high quality program.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	15	11

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 applicant presented a cohesive plan to effectively implement a comprehensive assessment, with some gaps. The State indicated that currently not all children are involved in assessment due to funding issues but would be once regulations were implemented, requiring universal screening in 2013 of all children in licensed care, not dependent on being involve in the TQRIS. The assessments chosen meet the guidelines established for assessments. Early childhood programs will be receive orientation, training and coaching on using the screening assessments. Each program will have the ability to choose an appropriate tool from the list given. Training will include understanding and implementing formative assessments. The TQRIS requires the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) to implement a comprehensive assessment system to be used at higher levels but not lower levels and in some programs but not others. A glaring gap is in the area of Adult-Child interactions where it is only required at the level 5. In person and on line training modules will differentiate the needs of different programs. The applicant indicates that avoidance of duplication of assessment administered children would be done through professional development. Teachers would be taught how to transition students using communication skills to avoid duplication. This would be an effective method of avoiding a child being assessed repeatedly by different programs if they participate in multiple programs or move around the state. No mention was made of using the data system to avoid duplication of assessments for children in multiple programs. The plan outlined is medium quality with partial implementation.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	15	12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

Health practices developed in the plan and the State TQRIS are impressive with some omissions. Requirements already in place require a health screening from a doctor for each child enrolling in a program. The State TQRIS also has health requirements built into it. There does not appear to be a clear progression of health standards implemented across the TQRIS. At the first level of the TQRIS, all children are required to have a 45 day screening, with successive screenings at predetermined dates. The state lacks requirements regarding further referrals and follow up which would aid in the identification of children with disabilities and early intervention. There seems to be a jump from no required follow up at earlier levels to requiring at Level 5 for the center to work with agencies that may be providing special services. The state indicated that programs will be given the choice of four assessments that align with regulations. Although not yet in place, proposed changes in regulations will require all licensed Early Child Care to use developmental screening starting in 2013 whether or not involved in the TQRIS. The State indicated that they then would develop procedures on the requirements for referrals and follow up. More information on the proposed policy and implementation would provide a clearer picture of what the State would envision for follow up for referrals. The State presented a plan to address young children's mental health through Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, which provides training and support for programs when working with social and behavioral issues. No clear plan exists for increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators on an ongoing basis in meeting health standards. The State has the start of an ambitious plan for every child being screened for developmental concerns and an early childhood mental health program supported by the Early Childhood Advisory Council. This is a high quality plan that is substantially implemented.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	15	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 applicant has a high quality plan that is partially implemented and leverages existing resources to support families in understanding best practices for their child. Maryland established practices that consider linguistic and cultural needs. They plan to use community listening forums and establish 24 parent advisory councils to provide a voice for families. The State has established a progression of standards for family engagement embedded in the TQRIS. Engagement starts at level 2 which requires two ways of engaging families in accordance with their Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework. There appears to be more emphasis on increasing the quality of the parent handbook rather than family engagement in the TQRIS. Parents have varying skill levels that would impact their use of the handbook. The State plan includes developing a resource guide for family engagement and training on the content areas of the Parent, Family and Community Framework for early childhood educators. Given the sparse information in the TQRIS on family activities to implement, the course guide would be a necessity. The applicant indicated that they plan to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported to implement family engagement strategies by providing the resource guide and training on the seven components. No numbers or targets were given regarding implementation for increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an ongoing basis. Specifying a baseline and target would have provided the opportunity to evaluate the State's ability to meet these criteria fully. Without this information, the plan cannot be judged as fully implemented. The most ambitious and innovative section of this plan is to expand all public library service in Title 1 areas to include Family Resource Centers. The plan uses a Library Advisory Council that will develop the resource centers located in communities of high need. Using a location in the neediest places not only gives a location that parents can access information and promote library visitation at a young age. Innovative ideas include "Family Parties" sponsored by schools and the business roundtable that engage families in learning about early learning and child development.

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	19
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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)

Maryland has a high quality plan that promotes an educated workforce. Maryland has developed and has a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that was developed in 1992 and has been revised to include current best practice. The Workforce competencies are integrated into coursework to meet minimum state licensing requirements. It appears that the state has a history in developing a frame work that will inform workers and improve child outcomes.-- Inherent in having a high quality workforce plan is understanding that those working with young children might never have considered continuing their education before joining the field and providing alternative ways to become credentialed as a Child Care Staff. It is apparent that Maryland understands and plans for this portion of their workforce. There are seven levels in Early Childhood Educators certification starting with meeting CCA Licensing requirements, moving to 45 hours of core knowledge with the ability to progress to level 6 which has three options. The plan clearly articulates each level and the component within it. Provided in the application was the Workforce Framework which includes indicators for child development, curriculum, health, safety, and nutrition, special needs, professionalism, and community. The State has agreements in place regarding four courses and transitioning those classes to the four year colleges as transfer credits. The applicant indicated a four year college could question the course(s) being transferred and require the ECE applicant to meet other requirements. What those other requirements might be were not reported. The components of the plan are well conceived and legislation has required collaboration between educational institutions. The credential plan appears to be high quality, substantially implemented.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	17

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 (b)(2)

The State provides a high quality response, substantially implemented. There are two ways that Maryland proposes to address professional development. First, a Leadership in Early Learning Academy with an initial one day training with a 1/2 day follow up. The quality of this professional development, with such a short training time and follow up, does not provide enough intensity to improve the quality of teacher interactions with children and their use of research based strategies. While a similar academy was proposed and is part of the Striving Reader State Plan, the makeup of the workforce is different than in Striving Readers. The proposed content of the academy does appear to be ambitious for the time allocated for the training. Second, the State plans to collaborate with a state university to create an alternative educational pathway for early childhood educators who have a degree in areas other than education, to be in place by December 2013. This is a viable strategy for improving the pool of an educated workforce. --Incentives proposed are ones that would make a difference to building a great workforce, such as scholarships (Child Care Center and Professional Development Fund), pre-service credits earned in public school and community colleges, vouchers for education, and assistance in paying for accreditation for centers applying for state and national certification.-- Aggregate data is available on credentialing but not yet at a public level. Information reported in the Child Care and Credentialing Program includes total number of programs participating and credential levels of early childhood educators for both centers and family child care homes. The plan proposed by the State includes development of a site for families to check on this information. Targets provided for increasing a progression to the next level appear to be ambitious yet achievable. By the year 2015 the State wants to increase credentialing at all levels by 25%. This translates into moving from a baseline in 2011 to the goal in 2015 of the following: Level 1- 1,463 to 3,233; Level 2-806 to 1,781; Level 3-2,017 to 4,458; Level 4-625 to 1,382; Level 5-450 to 994; Level 6-665 to 1,499.--Targets of the State plan for professional development appear to be ones that can be delivered with a reasonable timeline and implementation plan. The incentives already in place support the development of a great workforce of Early Childhood Educators.

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	19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state has a high quality plan for their Kindergarten Entry Assessment which is substantially implemented. The State is in the process of implementing a pilot for the assessment proposed to be used in this project. The current Kindergarten Entry Assessment is based on seven domains of Early Learning and Development and is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards. The State presented evidence that the first generation of the tool is valid and reliable based on the 2001-2002 assessment results. In the development of the KEA, both children with special needs and second language learners were included to ensure it was appropriate for all children. The State proposes to develop a new KEA which will be field tested, then fully implemented by year 2014-2015 to all children entering kindergarten. The applicant indicated that this will be a cross state project with Ohio which will share costs for the design. Maryland currently has invested one million dollars into its design.

	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)

Information provided by the applicant indicates that the Longitudinal Data System has all essential elements included and is a high quality plan. It includes unique identifiers for children, early childhood educators, programs which include child and family demographics, early childhood educator demographics, program level structural, operational and quality data, child level program participation and attendance data only for those in public schools. Currently the State has not included other early learning programs in this data system which is not fully implemented. Information provided indicates that the two systems will be linked (interface) and those using the program will not be required to move between two different programs to upload data or gain information so that information can be shared between programs. A real strength in the proposal is the cross state partnership with Ohio in developing the system. It provides for a cost effective way to build an effective data system. A public portal is not available at this time for families and early learning programs to access information about childcare, early childhood educators, child care professional development, fund, and accreditation support, assessment of professional qualifications, curriculum fund, subsidy payments, and attendance. A public portal is planned, but no timeline was given for its implementation. The applicant indicated that information would be available in real time to those sending queries once it is available. It appears well thought out as to the filters provided and the queries possible for informational purposes. A query can give information on the number of centers which participate in the TQRIS, by year, by number of children and by geographical location that can be used for improvement and decision making. Maryland provided evidence in the application that the data oversight requirements will comply with Federal, State, and local privacy laws. The applicant's data system is rated as high quality with partial implementation due to the lack of a public portal.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	242

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	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 applicant has an existing KEA in place.

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 State's goals and targets are ones that will improve the quality of early learning and development programs for high needs children. The state proposes to build on the foundation they have, improve structures they currently use and implement innovative programs for the children with the highest needs for quality early learning programs. The State has addressed all the areas required in the application, including focused investment areas of promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, an excellent plan for a great early childhood workforce, measuring outcomes and progress toward goals that the State of Maryland believes will best assist Maryland's children to prepare for kindergarten success.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # MD-5016

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 8:33 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	20
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state has met the criteria for high quality accessible system of Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs. In 2007, all kindergarten programs in Maryland were extended to a full day schedule and all four year old children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds gained the right to access publicly funded pre-kindergarten. Some programs appear to have been reduced such as supplemental state spending on Early Head Start and Head Start; yet the state funded preschool contributions have risen likely taking up the slack to serve a similar population. Contributions to IDEA Part appear to have been reduced in 2010 but are increasing in 2011 to 2008 levels; state contributions to CCDF are increased for 2011 along with state match for CCDF. From 2007 - 2011, the state match has been exceeded. TANF transfer to CCDF has been restored to 2008 levels in 2011. There is evidence that the state has maintained a commitment to serve Children with High Needs through its financial history. The tables showing the children served demonstrate an increasing number of children receiving services in most categories with some slight fluctuations in Part C and Part B and part year information available for CCDF. Maryland has a network of programs serving women and low-income families with children under four in 22 Family Support Centers addressing health and education needs of Children with High Needs under the age of four for the past 20 years. In 2009, the Maryland State Department of Education (MDSE) received an ARRA incentive grant to implement Part C Extended Option statewide. Children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) could choose to continue their child's participation in the Local Infants and Toddlers Program beyond the age of three to kindergarten. The Bridge to Excellence statute provided access to pre-kindergarten for all Children with High Needs. A public-private partnership was created at Title 1 school attendance areas named Judy Center Partnerships to make a formal commitment to improve school readiness for Children with High Needs; in 2009 Maryland also developed a Preschool for All business plan and established 11 pilot sites in licensed private child care settings to provide access to high quality programs for families with incomes below 300 percent of the FPL. The state provides a list of significant legislative actions and policies that helped to form to their early childhood agenda. In 2004, Maryland developed Early Learning and Development Standards for Pre-K with indicators and objectives. Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children Birth to Three was also published that year. Health promotion and family engagement

are evidenced through their Family Support Centers for children under four and their parent, Judy Center Partnerships, Head Start and the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation project. The early learning framework is the Maryland Model for School Readiness designed to promote early learning standards and offer guidance on developmentally appropriate instruction for all early learning and development programs. The Child Care Credentialing Program provides incentives for child care educators to access a freer ladder, improve credentials and professional skills. A workforce competency framework for pre-service was developed to identify competencies needed in working with young children. Data system development is ongoing since 2001. The Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) provides information about providers, children and families. Efforts to integrate ECE data into the longitudinal system began in 2010. These outlined projects, efforts and history provide ample evidence of Maryland's commitment to high quality Early Learning and Development, which is a strength of the proposal.

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

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)

Maryland's efforts to date to improve school readiness for children are commendable. Data show that 81% of kindergarteners enter school ready to learn as measured by the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment. The state proposes to push the bar even higher to increase that rate to 92% by 2015 and narrow the achievement gap for Children with High Needs. Goals have been further defined by sub-groups as follows: 88% of children from families with low incomes will be fully ready, an increase of 15 percentage points from the baseline of 73%; 76% of all children from low incomes will be fully ready as measured by the Language and Literacy Score of the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment, an increase of 15 percentage points over 2010 - 2011; the skills gap for the same target group defined by free and reduced meals will be narrowed by 8 percentage points compared to children whose families are not low income. Further goals are defined for English Language Learners, specifically 80% of all ELL entering kindergarten will be fully ready (an increase of 12%); Language and Literacy Scores will improve by 15 percentage points over baseline and the skills gap from non-English Language Learners will be reduced by 4 percentage points. Goals are also established for Children with Disabilities with increase of 14 percentage points on the composite score of the MMSR over baseline; 19% increase in Language and Literacy Score and the skills gap will be narrowed by 5 percentage points. These goals are ambitious, measurable and achievable considering the data and targets for tracking their progress. --The state provides an overall summary that includes several projects to include the establishment of local Early Learning Councils; Maryland EXCELS (TQRIS); Quality Capacity Building; Promoting statewide EL standards; Professional Development for EL standards; Comprehensive Assessment System, Child Development Innovations, Family Engagement and Support; Leadership Early Learning Academies; and Early Learning Data System. --The state has conceptualized their ideal early childhood system, demonstrating how the existing components, together with the projects and strategies chosen as a result of this competition, will support a highly effective alignment of systems supporting Children with High Needs. They further provide a chart outlining the core areas, current infrastructure and the RTT projects intended to address those areas. The plan appears to constitute an effective reform agenda and a credible path towards achieving the goals intended.

	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)

The state has substantially implemented the alignment and coordination for early learning and development across the state. In 2005, the legislature passed a law to transfer all child care functions to the Maryland State Department of Education. The Department established the Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) to lead the state's ECE system. MDSE will be the fiscal agent for RTT-ELC and the DECD will assume the oversight functions for implementation. The state level interagency governance structure is depicted as the Governor's Office who has the Governor's Office for Children. The Children's Cabinet is operated out of this office and includes the state agencies (reflected as Education, Health, Juvenile Justice, Welfare, Aging & Disabilities). The Maryland State Board of Education oversees the Maryland State Department of Education. The Governor's Advisory Council on Early Care and Education functions under the MSDE and reports to the Children's Cabinet. The interests of children with disabilities/developmental delays are represented on the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) which advises the Governor's Office on services affecting young children with disabilities. The EC Advisory Council will advise MSDE on the implementation of the grant. The interests of the child care community including family child care and center based care are represented in the statutorily required Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council and advises the Division of ECD. All three councils were involved in writing the plan, serving as the leadership team assisting MDSE in the application. The proposal outlines their process for making decisions and resolving disputes referring to their bylaws in the appendix A.3.1. However, the bylaws did not specifically reference dispute resolution which is considered a weakness. The plan describes the process for how the state will involve representatives from various programs, key stakeholders and families to have a voice in the project. --The state provided MOUs from the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education; the State Department of Education and the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Governor's Office for Children. An MOU is also provided between the State Department of Education and the University of Maryland School of Medicine. The scope of work is described for each of the partner agencies and the MOUs are signed. --The state provides an impressive number and quality of letters of support from a wide range of stakeholders policy makers, foundations, parent groups, provider groups and others supporting the intent and plans of the RTT-ELC competition. The state has provided ample evidence that it has a history of engaging key partners and plans to further that engagement through the activities targeted for investment in RTT-ELC.

Available

Score

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

15

13

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 provides a reasonable and well-developed budget for the execution of the projects and funding for systems building and direct services. The existing funds supporting early learning and development are outlined and described. Budget tables and narratives define how the state will use the funding to achieve the outcomes in the state plans. The amounts dedicated to each of the initiatives appear to be adequate to support the intended activities; includes costs that are reasonable and necessary for the objectives. The state provides details of the amount of funds budgeted for agencies, partners and intermediary organizations. It demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the state plan. A plan for sustainability is presented with the recognition that the cliff effect will most likely impact the EXCELS program; therefore, a plan is outlined to have this part of the initiative studied to determine the feasibility of the incentives past 2015 which is before the state budget for 2016 is being prepared which is considered a weakness. The study group will make recommendations by 2014 laying out the options for sustaining the incentives. The capacity building activities will be funded through the existing CCDF and state funds beginning in FFY15 and SFY16.

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 state has fully implemented a Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TQRIS) developed in 2001. The state has redesigned the system in 2009 and entered into the pilot stage in 2011. The new TQRIS, named Maryland EXCELS, is designed to provide more evidence-based criteria of quality; increase participation focusing on areas of high need; increase incentives for families and providers; increase public awareness on the importance of high quality care; improve validation of the system; and increase access to data for analysis and improvement. The state has outlined how the tiered program standards are linked to each of the six component areas. For example, early learning and development standards are addressed in Maryland EXCELS through accreditation, use of approved curriculum linked to state early learning standards, daily schedule and health promotion practices. A crosswalk is provided for each of the component areas. The state has provided evidence of their standards for centers, homes and school-age programs that are measurable and differentiate program quality levels. However, the standards appear to differ between public school programs as compared to licensed community based programs with no justification as to why these requirements differ in the same level which is considered a weakness. Licensing compliance is reflected in Level 1. The state has demonstrated that it has developed and adopted an effective Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System embracing all of the required components.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The state has partially implemented this criterion and presented a high-quality plan to maximize program participation in the TQRIS. The state has established an ambitious goal. Currently, 2% of the programs participate in the TQRIS. By 2015, the state has set a goal of 27% of all providers will be participating in Maryland EXCELS which includes all of the publicly funded programs. --To accomplish their goal, they will use several strategies. For low-income families, they will use built in co-payment incentives for families to increase the number of children with high needs to access high quality programs. Currently, only providers benefit from tiered reimbursement incentives. This strategy, coupled with parent education, is a strength in the Maryland plan. --Quality bonuses, in addition to increased subsidy reimbursements, will serve to incentivize participation. The Quality Awards will be awarded per program a one-time bonus based on the program's initial attainment of a given check level rating. Differential bonuses based on the percentage of children with high needs enrolled in the program will also be awarded. Credential supports and incentives for child care providers by credential level will also be provided. --The state provided a work plan to outline the strategies to promote participation in Maryland EXCELS inclusive of a marketing and outreach campaign. Overall, the plans and strategies are likely to promote good participation in the TQRIS.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state has partially implemented this criterion. The state will provide an online system for programs to register to participate in EXCELS. Programs are self-evaluated for their strengths and needs based on information presented through the registration process. Programs are not formally assessed until they reach a check Level 4 using an appropriate Environmental Rating Scale tool (ECERS-R, ITERS-R or FCCERS-R) which is a weakness as it appears that programs can participate in EXCELS, and receive financial incentives for participation prior to validation of information presented. A strength of the system proposed is that licensing specialists will review and validate the EXCELS information within 12 months. A second level of monitoring will occur when the licensing specialist makes a referral to the EXCELS Technical Assistance network. --The TA provider will conduct an on site review of the documentation, make recommendations for improvement and establish a plan for quality capacity building. The third level of monitoring will be conducted by EXCELS evaluators who will use a rubric to determine validity of the rating and accuracy of the documentation submitted. It does not appear that the state plans to create a professional development registry to verify and track practitioners through the system, use consistent data protocols as recommended by The National Registry Alliance and use these data to validate levels for staff qualifications and their continued progression, which is a weakness of the plan. --The state plans to provide a certificate for each program participating in Maryland EXCELS or some other type document to be displayed. Additionally, information about the rating of each child care facility will be available on the Check Child Care Maryland website. It is not clear whether the self-determined rating will appear on the child care licensing website or whether there will be validation of the information presented before a rating can be advertised, which is a weakness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The state has partially implemented this criterion and presents a quality plan to develop and implement a system for improving quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The state presents strategies to increase quality capacity in Title 1 attendance areas; an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center Approach providing quality improvement incentives for programs participating in EXCELS to include consultation on effective early learning, professional development, child wellness and family engagement. These strategies are aligned with the state's K-12 RTT-ELC efforts and appear to be innovative models. --The state proposes two new models to strengthen the role of families with low incomes to include community hubs and coaching and training for early learning and development programs to provide access to children who have Individualized Family Service Plans or Individualized Education Programs with

typically developing peers. They propose to establish satellite Judy Center sites at three needy sites and to establish five Preschool for All sites which are programs integrated into child care or Head Start that have met the ten quality benchmarks from the NIEER report. Community hubs will be established to provide a variety of accessible services to families who have Children with High Needs. Co-payment incentives for parents to choose higher quality centers will be used as a strategy. These initiatives appear to be innovative strategies to reach the defined targets, which are considered strengths. --The state has established goals to increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS tiers with ambitious targets. The baseline number of programs in Tiers 4 and 5 is 25 which is expected to increase to 929 by the end of the grant period. The state also presents ambitious targets for the number of children to be included in the top tiers of the TQRIS which is a strength of the state plan. The overall design of their plan and past history lends credence to their ability to achieve their targeted goals.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state presents a high quality plan for validating the effectiveness of the Maryland EXCELS TQRIS. They propose to engage a study that will evaluate the effectiveness of the model in progressing towards the goals; assess whether the check Levels of EXCELS differentiate levels of program quality; and assess the relationship between the quality ratings and children's learning and school readiness. However, the state does not specifically address whether the tiers in the TQRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality, particularly since the level requirements differ between public school programs as opposed to community-based programs which is a weakness. The state has developed a set of research questions that will add to the knowledge and understanding of the quality of programs, and the relationships between quality programs and child outcomes. The methodology proposed seems appropriate and plan is to begin in the fall of 2013 when the pilot and field testing of EXCELS is complete.

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.	15	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 has fully implemented early learning standards statewide that are research-based, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and aligned to the state's K-12 standards inclusive for children with disabilities. The standards are reflected in three documents: Healthy Beginnings Standards for birth to 48 months; Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten (MMSR) and Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. The state provides a chart aligning the essential domains of school readiness with each set of standards and included them for review. --The state provides evidence that it has aligned the Early Learning Standards with the K-3 academic standards. In aligning the standards, they decided to call the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten standards from the Maryland State Curriculum, the "Maryland Model or School Readiness (MMSR) Framework and Standards." They also changed the name of English Language Arts to Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Science to Mathematical and Scientific Thinking. They included a domain called Social and Personal Development for prekindergarten and kindergarten. In 2011, the MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development and Division of Instruction worked on draft Pre-K Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. --The state provides evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricular and activities, assessment systems and the state's workforce knowledge and competency frameworks. The Maryland Early Childhood Curriculum Project conducted a curriculum review to determine those that reflected the state's early learning standards and underlying pedagogy, and had professional training program to orient teachers to implementation. Programs receiving state or federal funding through the Division of Early Childhood Development are required to choose one of the MSDE recommended curriculum options. Comprehensive assessment systems incorporate the MMSR Framework and Standards with the Work Sampling System (WSS) assessment indicators embedded. They customized the WSS by incorporating fall and spring early learning benchmarks which was included for review. These are embedded in the workforce knowledge and competency framework, which is a strength. --The standards are promoted to increase understanding and commitment through five pathways identified by the state: Early Childhood Curriculum Project; MMSR Professional Development; MSDE Standards for High Quality EC Programs and Program Accreditation; statewide network of Infant and Toddler Specialists and Workforce Competency Framework. The state is also proposing to develop a guide designed to serve as a resource supporting the implementation of the state's common core curriculum in preschool as well as the lower elementary grades. The guide will feature toolkits and strategies for developing culturally and linguistically diverse environments meeting several criteria which is a strength of the plan. They also propose two new projects: Expand the Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Through Stories (VIOLETS) language and literacy curriculum in early childhood programs in Title 1 schools and; implement two field tests of the early science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program for preschoolers in early learning and development programs located in Title 1 attendance areas. These are strengths of the plan to further promote and expand the understanding and commitment to the standards.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	15	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 state has partially implemented this criterion and presents a high quality plan to support effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems. Four instruments will be available as selected by the MSDE in early 2012. Later in the year, the workgroup will make recommendations to their State Advisory Council, specific assessment instruments targeting parents, providers and pediatricians as follows: Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), The Parent Evaluation of Development Status (PEDS), Early Screening Inventory - Revised (ESI-R) and Best Beginnings. These tools will be used in addition to the health inventory that is required prior to enrollment at a child care program. A formative assessment and Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be developed by MSDE in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education. The Environmental Rating Scales will be used to measure the progress of the TQRIS, Maryland EXCELS but only for the top levels in the TQRIS which is considered a weakness. Teacher-child interaction will be measured through the CLASS as the observation protocol for classroom observation and accreditation. These instruments are valid and reliable instruments to obtain critical data for their intended purposes. --The state outlines a professional development, training and coaching strategy to help early childhood educators understand the instruments and how they can be used. Existing CCDF funds will be used to expand the number of reliable assessors on the Environmental Rating Scales. The state will continue its training on Healthy Beginnings, the current benchmark for prekindergarten. Face to face and online training will be conducted for this purpose. Training on the CLASS will be incorporated into their professional development plans. The methods proposed for articulating and sharing assessment results to avoid duplication was not well developed which is considered a weakness. The state proposes the development of one seamless system of professional development and support for the Maryland assessment system: developmental screening process; formative assessments for children; and the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The state plans to introduce regulations in 2013 to require licensed child care programs to use a developmental screening after a child's enrollment with referral services available for follow-up as necessary. Further, the state outlines a plan for training and implementation of the assessment system.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	15	11

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

The state has partially implemented this criterion and presents a high quality plan to identify and address the health, behavioral and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness. The state provides a chart that highlights the Maryland EXCELS component, the health component and the areas/levels where these are addressed in the standards. The state outlines their efforts to increase the number of early childhood educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting the health needs of children but did not indicate numbers or percentages which is considered a weakness. They have addressed the promotion of children's development through their Early Learning Standards, Healthy Beginnings and the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Framework and Standards. They have also developed an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation model providing ongoing targeted training and technical assistance for early learning and development programs, conduct summer institutes and go online with the system by September 2013. The state promotes healthy eating habits, improves nutrition and expands physical activities through its "Take 15 for the Health of It" program and calendar that includes daily nutrition tips, exercises and

activities that families and providers can incorporate into their daily programs. This is also addressed in their progression of standards for EXCELS. They received a \$400K grant for the purpose of improving nutrition and physical activity in child care settings from the US DOA Child and Adult Care Food Program. The state is leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who are screened by 2013, requiring the use of state-recommended developmental screening instruments for all licensed child care programs; training cohorts of pediatricians on developmental screening practices and training pediatricians in first-line detection of early childhood mental health issues. They present a work plan that is reasonable and performance targets that are ambitious, yet achievable. These are considered strengths of the plan.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	15	11

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

The state has partially implemented the criterion for engaging and supporting families and presents a high quality plan to further develop their efforts. --The state provides a chart highlighting the Family Engagement Progression of Standards through their TQRIS, Maryland EXCELS. They provide evidence of their past commitment via funding through the Friends of the Family and the Maryland Community for Children, which merged to become the Maryland Family Network, the CCR&R and Family Support Center oversight agency. They provide a list of activities planned by the Early Childhood Advisory Council related to families which are considered strengths. --The state highlights a plan to train Early Childhood Educators but did not provide the increasing number and percentage trained and supported to implement the family engagement strategies which is considered a weakness. --The Program Standards will be overseen by The Coalition of Family Engagement jointly chaired by the Maryland Family Network and the Maryland State Head Start Association. Statewide expansion of Reach Out and Read is targeted and the state provides a comprehensive set of activities to engage and support families, which are considered strengths.

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 (b)(1)

Maryland has partially implemented a workforce knowledge and competency framework and a progression of credentials and presented a plan to further work on this area. The state included the competencies they have developed for child care centers and family child care homes. A chart is included that outlines the core knowledge area, the expectations of the child care professional and the indicators of competency. A weakness of the competencies as presented is there are no increasing levels of competence that are linked to the career ladder (also included in the evidence) for the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program. Rather, the career ladder is tied to either training or college level coursework by levels, but those levels do not correspond to the increasing competence expected as levels increase (following Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning). Maryland has made progress in developing articulation agreements and working with the state's postsecondary institutions. They have also increased the number of early childhood educators through the Associate of Arts Degree in Teaching in Early Childhood Education (AAT-ECE). The state proposes to establish a review process for this degree, offering to determine its ongoing relevance to the knowledge, skills and abilities required.

	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 state has partially implemented the criterion for supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities and presents a high quality plan for how those efforts will be expanded and supplemented through RTT-ELC. The state plans to assist early childhood educators to obtain their teaching certification so that they can achieve the goals outlined in Maryland's Preschool for All in Maryland: Recommendations of the Maryland Task Force on Universal Prekindergarten Education. --An alternative pathway for teacher preparation in early childhood education who currently have degrees and are seeking state certification will be implemented by July 2013, which is considered a strength. Flexibility in the manner that teachers can pursue teacher education to accommodate early childhood educators working fulltime is also planned. Leadership in Early Learning Academies will be implemented to provide in-depth training on pedagogy, standards and the assessment system. --Scholarships will be provided via a scholarship program called the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund; articulation for preservice credits between local school systems and community colleges; training voucher/reimbursements for continuing education and program accreditation supports are planned as incentives. These are also considered strengths. --The state plans to report aggregated data on early childhood educator development, advancement and retention by program type and location for those participating in the Maryland Credential Program. It is not clear whether the state plans to collect practitioner data via a registry to provide tools for individualized planning, transcripts and career development for all practitioners, which is a potential weakness of the plan. --The state proposes to increase the number and percentage of early childhood educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials by 25% at all levels (1-6) by 2015, which seems a reasonably ambitious goal.

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	20

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
The state has substantially implemented this criterion and the response is of high quality. Maryland has been implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) since 2001 called the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment. It covers 7 domains of learning and is subdivided into indicators or domains of competence. --The MMSR has been determined to be valid by internal and external expert consultants. A new KEA will be developed in collaboration with the State of Ohio and will be administered for all of Maryland's kindergarten students beginning in the fall of 2014. Both states are actively involved in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Consortium. --The KEA will be linked to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse. The state reports that it will continue to leverage funding from the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) sources. In addition, Maryland and Ohio will collaboratively share the costs for the development of the KEA and once completed, will make it available to other states.

	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 partially implemented the criterion for building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies and has provided a high quality plan. The table (A)(1)-13 indicates that all of the essential data elements are included in their data systems. However, it appears that the Early Childhood Educator identifier is present for those working in public schools but it does not appear that information is captured at the present on the ECE workforce in general, which is considered a weakness. --Enhancements planned for the data systems will broaden the scope and robustness of the Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) capturing the additional data pertinent to program, early childhood educator and child profiles. These enhancements will enable uniform data collection and easy entry for the essential data elements and are considered strengths. --The enhancements for the CCATS system used for child care subsidies will also enable child care providers, staff, families receiving subsidies and trainers to work directly with their records within their system. The state reports that this will give programs and ECE educators easy access to the system to enable continuous improvement and decision making which are considered strengths. --The state ensures adherence to data system oversight requirements and privacy laws.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	234

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	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 has demonstrated that it has already implemented a KEA that meets the selection criteria and has earned a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion. The planned strategies will further their understanding and efforts on the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	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 state has presented a comprehensive quality plan that has the potential to significantly improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs in Maryland. They have already accomplished a significant amount of alignment through their creation of the Division of Early Childhood Development under the MSDE. The activities planned through the RTT-ELC competition have the potential to further streamline and increase access, promote early learning outcomes for children and build upon the strides made on behalf of the early childhood workforce. The revisions planned for the KEA will assist the state in ensuring that its activities and strategies are on target in preparing Children with High Needs for success.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # MD-5016

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 10:58 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	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 of Maryland has made a consistently strong commitment to early learning and development and this is documented by both legislative action and budget allocations. As early as 1999, upon recommendation by the Thornton Commission (inspired by the recommendations of the National Education Goals Panel), Maryland has established goals directed at increasing the quality and availability of early childhood programs in their state. Some examples include the passage of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act in 2002. This act ensured all four year olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds would have at a minimum 15 hours / week of early learning and development. Full day kindergarten resulted in a per pupil funding increase from each child receiving .5 of the state's per pupil rate to 1 per pupil rate. The budget for the Maryland Division of Early Childhood Development increased by 145 million dollars - a significant state investment. The state further demonstrates their support and financial investment by allocating funds to expanded Head Start and Early Head Start during the summer months. This further demonstrates the State's commitment to school readiness for their high need populations. (b) Further investment and innovation is noted specific to their high needs population in their leverage of the extended option for In 2009, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)'s Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services received an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) incentive grant to implement the IDEA Part C Extended Option statewide. This innovation allows families currently receiving intervention services to choose to continue beyond age 3. To further provide evidence of targeting those with high needs, the state effectively demonstrates their sensitivity to meeting the needs of high needs children by presenting their awareness of shifting demographics and the increasing needs of ELL in their early childhood programs. They have actively recruited this population in their Judy Center Partnerships within local school systems. The applicant provides strong documentation that they make every attempt to reach out to high needs youngsters and their families. (c) The applicant offers extensive evidence of their legislative policies and practices related to early learning and development. The applicant provides a historical perspective beginning in 1999 that continues to their most recent RTT status that documents their ongoing awareness and commitment to advancing services to meet the need of their youngest citizens in an ongoing effort to prepare them for school success. (d) The applicant clearly has a strong foundation upon which they can build effective and results oriented early

learning and development supports that will increase the school readiness of high need children. They clearly articulate these foundations in their plan to move from good to great by building on their current Early Learning Framework; their existing comprehensive set of assessments; their statewide early childhood data system, using their Departmental infrastructure within the Department of Education to implementing a tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant offers explicit examples of their current work in the key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system. They demonstrate a solid footing in each area and describe their planned next steps in each area. Most impressively in each key area the applicant uses existing data and its analysis to support the specific strategies they are proposing. Additionally they directly and specifically link each key element to furthering the school readiness of their high need population. This explanation is done exceptionally well, as they identify the existing key element and how it is currently functioning and offer their proposed expansion through RTT-ELC. Based on the applicant's response to this criteria, the score reflects a high quality plan.

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

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)

A2 (a) The applicant proposes a strong and ambitious yet achievable agenda that will likely result from their proposed work. These goals are ambitious targeted to their most high need population and use existing data from programs. The applicant effectively demonstrates that the goals are indeed achievable within the timelines they propose. For example, the applicant provides a clear definition of school readiness based on entry data. They document an overall increase from 2001 - 2011 based on their current work as going from 49% fully ready to 81%. They note that this dramatic increase has not been the case for their most vulnerable children and thus target them for their RTT-ELC. Their target is to move from 81 percent to 92 percent in 2015, as measured by the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment. In particular, the state aims to push the trend line upwards for children with high needs -- including children from families with low incomes, children with developmental delays/disabilities, and English Language Learners-- thereby narrowing the readiness gap and improving the odds of success for children with high needs entering kindergarten. By doing so the State will not only narrow the readiness gap between these children and their peers, but increase the overall rate of school readiness among all children. This is presented extremely effectively and the applicant presents a solid justification for this target goal by providing specific metrics, current data, and analysis of program effectiveness.

(b) The applicant provides a strong cohesive and informed summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates their approach and plan for the use of RTT-ELC and to achieve their goal. Maryland's RTT-ELC State Plan proposes ten specific projects which address the scope of the grant. The projects are: Project 1 - Creating Local Early Childhood Councils; Project 2 - Implementing a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for all early learning and development programs, named Maryland EXCELS; Project 3 - Establish an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center that provides quality capacity building for programs participating in Maryland EXCELS; Project 4 - Revising the early learning standards to align with Common Core Standards; Project 5 - Professional Development for to promote the use of the early learning standards by all early learning and development programs; Project 6 - Refining Maryland's comprehensive assessment system in early childhood, including the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment; Project 7 - Addressing the health and behavioral needs of children through a coherent set of early intervention and prevention programs; Project 8 - Creating a Coalition of Family Engagement and three statewide outreach efforts to promote family's engagement in being their children's first teacher; Project 9 - Establishing Leadership in Early Learning Academies for educators from school and early childhood programs to promote rigorous yet developmentally appropriate teaching practices for pre-kindergarten through grade 2; Project 10 - Enhancing the existing early childhood data system to link with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System. Each Project is described with enough detail to understand how it fits and supports the overall goal of the project. The applicant leaves no doubt that they have developed a clear and informed pathway by which they will implement this proposal and achieve their goal. (c) The applicant will address all Focused Investment Areas. Given their existing strengths in each of these areas their rationale for doing so is implicit throughout this proposal. The applicant provides a high quality plan that is reflected in their description of their reform agenda and their potential for effectively meeting the needs of the all children.

	Available	Score
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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(1) The applicant effectively demonstrates and provides evidence of a strong governance structure that will be used to inform, guide, and manage the grant. They describe how it builds upon existing interagency governance. Specifically they describe that The State Board of Education, as an independent board, has governance over the operations of Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE, through the State Superintendent of Schools, is a member of the Children's Cabinet, chaired and staffed by the Governor's Office for Children and they note the addition of the Governor's Advisory Council on Early Care and Education in 2008, with the State Superintendent of Schools as its chair. The applicant's response is high quality and substantially implemented. The applicant presents strong and compelling evidence that this direct linkage strengthens the relationship between MSDE, as the lead agency and fiscal agent of this grant, and the other child-serving agencies on the Children's Cabinet. In addition MSDE works closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) on policy, procedural, and technology issues pertaining to services for young children who are under 6 years of age. Throughout their proposal the applicant describes the addition of local advisory councils that are innovative and forward thinking and will be used to enhance their governance structure. (2) Roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency MSDE, their State Advisory Council and the interagency coordinating council for part C are detailed through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and letters of support. Given the applicant's details and ten clear project components, these are especially relevant and meaningful. They each represent clearly how and what each agency will do to contribute to the overall success of this proposal. (3) A procedural method is described for making decisions. The applicant presents

procedures to guide mandatory expectations as legislated and are relevant to their proposal, as well as interagency protocols that are used when disputes occur. The applicant provides strong evidence that both policies and procedure are in place to effectively and formally make decisions and to bring forward and resolve disputes. (4) An exemplary plan for key stakeholder input, including parents and families of children with high needs, is presented. The applicant describes a process currently used by their State Early Childhood Advisory Council whereby they convene focus groups with parents and families, including those of children with high needs, on the quality of the services for young children and their families. They state that this practice has been extremely informative and goes above and beyond the required process conducted by Head Start programs and the formal process of family engagement concerning children with disabilities. It is their intent to use this process to inform and guide their RTT-ELC work. (b) Strong evidence in the form of MOUs and letters of support for the State's plan are provided that detail "scope of work" and that is aligned to the ten Project components. (1) Terms and conditions; (2) "scope of work" and (3) all required signatures are provided. The applicant offers a detailed chart that clearly demonstrates their governance and accountability structure including those for the Governor's Office for Children and the Cabinet members, Department of Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and Department of Human Resources (DHR). This structure is clearly reflected in their supporting documents. The scope of work of the Participating State Agencies, which is specifically documented in the appendices, most impressively demonstrates how each will support the main objectives of the State Plan, the improvement of program quality among all early learning and development programs and the early educator work force in order to meet the applicant's policy goal of school readiness. (c) The applicant persuasively demonstrates that they have strong support for this proposal. They provide letters of support that go above and beyond the expected "sign on" of partners. Partners offer not only good will but acknowledgement of the importance of this effort to the State and their confidence in the applicants ability to see this initiative through successfully. Letters provided reflect their broad base of support throughout the state including: government officials, education partners including institutes of higher learning, community stakeholders such as libraries, health care providers, and private entities as well as the Chamber of Commerce. These letters frequently provide relevant information regarding prior successful partnerships with the lead partner.

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

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 provides information and strong evidence that is backed by data to show they will maximize the use of existing funds from a wide variety of sources. They provide a thorough overview of the federally and state funded programs listed in chart format and include those they feel are critical to the current infrastructure which forms the foundation for their plan. They demonstrate how they (MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development) have realigned its budget over the past fiscal years. One example of this is the CCDF quality improvement funds were realigned to support work force development through the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program which is now being used as the foundation for additional incentives through this grant for early learning and development programs participating in Maryland EXCELS - their proposed TQRIS. The chart provided further demonstrates the strength of their overall proposal, as each existing funding source is clearly aligned with their specific programmatic financial supports; this can in turn be aligned with the 10 project components the applicant presents as their RTT-ELC proposal. For example: State Head Start Supplemental Grant Head Start summer programs and CCDF Child care subsidy funds used to support child care licensing; Child care quality improvement; and the Child care data management system (CCATS). Each of these components is clearly linked with their plan of implementation. (b) The detailed budget tables and narratives are reasonable and substantively informed by current and prior work. The applicant provides a completed table that

describes existing Federal, State, private, and local funds. They are substantial and projected to sustain over the course of the funding period. The applicant applies data to inform and project their needed costs. As mentioned previously, this State has great financial supports and investments in early development and learning. While this is a strength, a greater strength is the fact that the applicant demonstrates a keen ability to leverage existing funding and align it with their newer initiatives and expectations. This budget clearly is one that is informed, aligns with their stated intent, and sufficiently provides for the successful achievement of their goal of significantly impacting their most high need children so they enter school ready to succeed. (c) The applicant provides exceptional insights and planning for sustainability. They anticipate their greatest expense beyond RTT-ELC to be funds to continue Maryland EXCELS their proposed TQRIS, and related incentives. To plan for sustainability and funding, they will convene a Maryland EXCELS Study Group by January 1, 2014 to examine the feasibility of the incentives past December 31, 2015. The timing of the Study Groups' work coincides with the development of the state budget for FY16. The Study group will include members from the Governor's Office, Department of Budget and Management, and the Joint Committee for Children, Youth, and Families. The Study Group will make recommendations by July 1, 2014, laying out the options for sustaining the costs for the new incentives for EXCELS. Part of the charge of the Study Group will be the determination to establish a requirement to have all publicly funded early learning and development programs enroll in Maryland EXCELS. Plans are in place so that the greater capacity of the child care resource and referral agency will be funded through the existing CCDF and state funds, starting in FFY15 and SFY16 to bring it in alignment with the standard budget years. The applicant provides further project specific sustainability plans in chart format. The level of detail and thoughtful plan for sustainability for the RTT-ELC work is impressive, further strengthening the overall approach of this applicant. The budget information provided effectively demonstrates how the applicant will build upon strong and historically consistent investments throughout the state. This positions them to use RTT-ELC to maximize current funds. Further, these initial investments serve to inform with a good degree of accuracy funds they will need to achieve their goal. Based on the applicant's response to this criteria their score reflects a high quality plan.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

B 1 (a) The applicant has developed an informed and comprehensive tiered rating system to move early learning and development programs and workforce in their state forward. Their Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) is named Maryland EXCELS. EXCELS is described throughout the proposal and is integral to their approach. It is based on Early Learning Standards, a comprehensive assessment system, early childhood educator qualifications, health promotion practices and effective data practices. This system reflects a retooling of the TQRIS that the state has been implementing since 2001. The State of Maryland currently has a fully implemented statewide TQRIS with associated reimbursement. This system has been in the process of redesign since 2009 and began its pilot phase in September of 2011. Key objectives in their retooled system include: more evidence based criteria of quality; increased participation of high need population; increased incentives for families and providers; increased public awareness of the importance of high quality care; stronger validation of the system; and increased access to data for analysis and improvement. (b) Most impressively the applicant has provided, to a great extent, specific valid measures and tools that are valid, reliable, and have been used to inform prior work as well as the development of this proposal. Program levels are differentiated and aligned with national expectations and conform with specifically high expectations. The applicant offers extensive evidence of a thorough consideration of national standards in each of their TQRIS areas and tiers. They further provide information regarding how tiers were crosswalked with Head Start frameworks in child outcomes and family engagement. EXCELS also embeds support for centers to acquire national or state accreditation. (c) The applicant describes how their TQRIS will be integrated within their current licensing process. The entry point for

their proposed TQRIS at baseline is licensing. Compliance is further supported through the use of real time data keeping. This electronic system ensures that verification occurs electronically and is based on real-time data, the loss of a program's license or certain compliance violations related to the safety and well-being of children can trigger an immediate loss of the program's quality rating check level. The applicant provides a plan that is scored as high quality and substantially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

B2 (a) Maryland has developed and will implement a high-quality plan to maximize program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) by establishing effective policies and practices with the goal of having all publicly funded early learning and development programs included in Maryland EXCELS. Head Start, child care centers and family child care providers in high need areas were recruited to participate in the pilot of Maryland EXCELS beginning in September of 2012. In this way the applicant intends to make sure high needs children and their programs immediately benefit from this improved system. They note that they have a waitlist of programs wishing to pilot EXCELS. This speaks to the applicant's efficacy in promoting and marketing the new and improved TQRIS. Over the past ten years, Maryland has almost doubled the enrollment of children with high needs in publicly funded programs. Other evidence of their increased services to high needs children and their families is documented by Child Care Subsidy Program reimbursement rates that have been increased twice since the transfer of child care to MSDE in 2005-2006, and co-payments for families have been kept at 10 percent of family gross income. In addition, since 2007, all four-year-olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have had access to enrollment at public school pre-kindergarten. Under EXCELS, parents who are eligible for Child Care Subsidy vouchers will be encouraged to seek high quality programs, and will, as a result, reduce the amount of their assigned copayment. The applicant's plan for doing this in a tiered manner is illustrated in the chart provided by the applicant. The range goes from 25% to 75% co pay as tier status (quality) increases of the provider selected by the parent. To support workforce development and retention, EXCELS will implement a system of program quality bonuses. These program Quality Awards will be awarded per program as a one-time bonus, based on a program's initial attainment of a given Check Level rating. Programs will also be eligible for differential bonuses based on the percentage of children with high needs enrolled in the program. Special additional staff incentives for more advanced and specialized training is offered such as advanced training in specific health needs i.e. allergies and asthma and/or working with special needs populations such as disabilities and English Language Learners. This is noted as an innovative approach to ramping up specific knowledge of early educators. (c) Maryland has set ambitious and achievable targets. The targets are based on other state implementations and are considered to be viable. The applicant provides extensive data upon which their targets were developed. With the evidence offered their targets are clearly ambitious, reflecting high expectations and, based on prior success, are achievable using their well laid out plan. Their thoughtful approach includes how they will recruit high need programs and families and how they will systematically move them upward in their TQRIS status. The applicant provides a plan that is high quality and partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

B 3 (a) The applicant describes their plan for using valid and reliable tools for monitoring, trained monitors with inter rater reliability with appropriate frequency throughout the implementation of their TQRIS. Their plan maximizes the use of technology and self-evaluation. They also propose some more intensive randomized monitoring in several tiers to check for validity and reliability. The applicant's approach is one where, as a program moves up, more thorough and comprehensive monitoring occurs. Technical assistance providers through the regional Child Care Resource Center and licensing specialist will be the primary staff. Use of the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) - Early Childhood ERS, Infant Toddler ERS, and Family Child Care FCC ERS all of which the state has history and validity in use, is maximized. The applicant provided a timeline to be used to ramp up the number of those trained in the use of this assessment and within which agency/department staff would come to demonstrate how they would meet this need. Though CLASS will be used in more intensive high need areas, a similar detail of who were become trained and reliable was not provided. Though it is noted that some CLASS assessments appear to be part of the work of the contracted vendor who will be conducting evaluation on the system, there is a lack of detail regarding the human resources needed to accomplish this. (b) The applicant offers specific and detailed information regarding how they will provide quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development programs and other stakeholders in user friendly formats. As an example, the applicant provides a screen shot of their website, which will have two portals one for data management and EXCELS management and the other available to the public. On this site, parents, stakeholders, and providers can access EXCELS rating status. All participating programs will receive a certificate to display at their facility. TQRIS information and status is available on the Check Child Care Maryland website - an existing and searchable website in which EXCELS information will be available. The Child Care Resource and Referral site LOCATE whose system pulls down information from the CCAT data warehouse also provide TQRIS status information. The applicant provides a plan that is high quality and partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

B4 (a) The applicant offers several policies and practices designed to promote continual improvement in Early Learning and Development programs. The applicant provides detailed information regarding its incentives for staff as they increase their skills and competencies. These are most frequently in the form of one time payments as they achieve a higher status as per the TQRIS. Specialized training for the early education workforce to meet the needs of more at risk children and families is noted as integral to their success. This is another example of this applicant's holistic and informed approach to improving quality. (b) The applicant offers specific supports for families who have children with high needs to access high-quality programs (full day, full year transportation, meals, family support services). To more directly meet this need, the applicant proposes several effective strategies to do this in Title 1 attendance areas and geographic locations that are underserved with a high demographic representation of high needs children. They propose to provide these programs with access to coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance as they move through the tiered quality levels. Through this approach they intend to build a support system that will not only be beneficial for young children's school readiness skills, but will also increasingly build a strong infrastructure foundation, particularly for Title 1 schools. One such model they propose, based on the RTT K-12 plan in the state is: Breakthrough Centers. These Centers are designed to coordinate all support services for schools and then apply coaching models to assist school districts in a strategic plan to turn their schools around. The applicant's complementary Early Childhood Breakthrough Center, will be implemented by the child care resource and referral agencies, and will coordinate all program improvement incentives provided by the State, and bring it to bear at early learning and development programs, located in Title 1 attendance areas. In this way they are confident that RTT-ELC and the current RTT select the same approach to transform the learning opportunities for children birth to grade 5. Other models with similar effective evidence that are integral to the proposal and demonstrate outreach to high need children include: Community Hubs designed to create a single platform in the community for services to pregnant women, children from birth to kindergarten, their families, and child care providers. Hubs may offer licensed child care and drop-in care while parents are on site. They provide services through home visiting and in the center, and they include aggressive outreach to all who care for young children within the Title I school attendance area. Hubs depend not only on multiple state funding sources but also on local public and private contributions. They offer services full-day, full-week, full year, including parenting education, health education and access to health care, employment readiness activities, adult education (GED, ABE, ESOL, external diploma, alternative high school, etc.), and facilitate access to services by offering service coordination, transportation, meals, and non-traditional hours of operation. Coaching and training for early learning and development programs to provide increase access for children who have Individualized Family Services Plans (IFSPs) or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) with typically developing peers is another strategy proposed for use with these high needs areas. Scale up of other proven methods are included within the application as well. High needs populations are clearly and effectively a focus of the work this applicant proposes. (c) The applicant's benchmarks for increasing the number of programs in their upper tiers and the number of high needs children attending programs in the upper tiers is ambitious yet achievable. The applicant convincingly presents a planful approach informed by current work and data to do so. It is their intent that by December 31, 2015, 40 percent of all programs in MD EXCELS will be at Check Levels 4 and 5 – their highest tiers. Their ambitious goals stress the critical importance of narrowing the readiness gaps for children with low-income status, English language learners, and children with developmental delays/disabilities. They intend, by December 31, 2015, that 65 percent of all children with high needs will be enrolled in programs at Check Levels 4 and 5. The applicant responds to this criteria with a high quality plan that is partially implemented.

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

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)

B5 (a) The applicant provides a high quality plan to measure the effectiveness and validity of their TQRIS. They state that this will be an independent study conducted by a qualified vendor and will focus on project implementation. The applicant identifies three directives the study will investigate. These are the relationship between quality indicators and the distribution of quality within in EXCELS programs across the state. Their plan draws upon the experiences of research teams evaluating QRIS in other states, including Ohio, and the multi-state INQUIRE QRIS research consortium. This is certain to positively impact the capacity of this important component of their project. The validation study will utilize data collected at three levels: 1) program (EXCELS indicators, administrative data, and received technical assistance), 2) classroom (classroom observations, teacher questionnaires, and teacher participation in professional development opportunities), and 3) child (Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) data, formative assessment data, and parent ratings). The applicant provides a detailed timeline for implementation, tasks to be completed and methodology to be used. (b) Through the applicant's proposed use of a multi-state team and their use of quantitative and qualitative measures, their methodology to assess the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to child learning and school readiness has the

potential to inform both the work of the state and the early learning and development work of the nation as it crosses statewide systems and practices to comparatively describe TQRIS specific impact on programs and child outcomes. The response to this criteria is scored as high quality.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	15	15
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>C1 (a) Maryland has a set of fully-implemented early learning standards that are research-based, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. The applicant describes several strategies used to ensure their early learning development standards meet this quality indicator. For example, they describe how the standards – both infant and toddler Healthy Beginnings and Preschool – Maryland Model for School Readiness were developed with guidance from Early Head Start and Head Start developmental standards and outcomes; convening of specialized experts in workgroups that included specialists in child psychology, early intervention, and dual language learners. Healthy Beginnings guidelines were vetted, analyzed, and revised based on feedback from national experts and a local advisory group. This expert feedback focused specifically on the standards usability and content. This vetting process was extensive with attention to each domain, activity, resource, and lip with the focus on meeting the needs of all children and their families by using inclusive language and providing activities and resources that are sensitive to different cultures. The development of the MMSR Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten standards emerged from the work of the State Curriculum for pre-k – 8 th grade. Further the language and literacy standards were enhanced using the state's English Language Proficiency State Curriculum, to further demonstrate there is flexibility and versatility so the Pre K standards are applicable to the diverse English Language Learner (ELL) population. (b) Maryland has intentionally and with an informed process aligned their birth to five standards horizontally with nationally recognized standards and vertically with their State and national standards. Two examples they reference demonstrate this. It is worth noting that though these standards have been aligned with the national Head Start outcomes for preschool children in 2003 they have already realigned with the newer outcomes framework (2010). This demonstrates a commitment by the applicant for relevance and insurance that their State standards reflect the current research and maintain their relevance. In addition Maryland has aligned their standards with state K – 8 standards. The applicant states that this alignment has always been viewed as "critical" to an effective system and they demonstrate that work that reflects this belief. In response to a directive from the State Board of Education the state renamed its K to12 education system to Pre-K to 12, and the Board required MSDE to develop a pre-kindergarten to 8th grade Voluntary State Curriculum. The alignment of prekindergarten to K-8 standards applied to all subject areas required by state</p>

regulations, including Physical Education and the Arts in addition to the four core subject areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Impressively, the applicant has not only aligned these areas but where possible has selected appropriate category names so that they reflect those of the systems they are aligning with and are more easily cross walked. (c) Maryland's early learning framework currently has two sets of standards that define what young children should know and be able to do within specified age spans: Maryland Healthy Beginnings: Supporting the Development and Learning from Birth through Three Years of Age. The applicant describes effectively how their early learning standards are integrated into their State accreditation system. Additionally they describe their prior use in their Curriculum Project, a rigorous review process that reviewed and identified curricula for statewide recommendation that is closely aligned with their standards across program type and age groupings. (d) Both the Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children (the precursor to Healthy Beginnings at that time) and the MMSR standards are embedded in the Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant describes this in further detail in response to (D). In addition one of key filters for the examination of curricula in the aforementioned Curriculum Project is their provision for training for teachers so that early educators and caregivers could understand the connection of standards to practice. Standards are embedded within the State's comprehensive assessment system. The MMSR Framework and Standards has all the Work Sampling System (WSS) assessment indicators embedded in the document. This provides further evidence of how the applicant is informing the practitioners regarding the alignment of the standards' objectives with the assessment indicators. (d) Maryland has clearly and effectively described their statewide commitment to their State birth to five standards within multiple contexts including those serving high needs populations. Their standards are integral to their TORIS, required curricula, comprehensive assessment, and state accreditation system. The applicant offers five pathways through which their standards are integrated. Additionally, planned project initiatives embed their standards including a proposed pedagogy guide for pre k - Grade 2 and the inclusion of two specific curricula identified in early literacy (VIOLETS) and science/technology (STEM). The applicant has a fully implemented high quality set of early learning standards and guidelines that are fully integrated within their early learning programs, used to develop their early learning workforces and provide a solid foundation to build upon. The applicant offers explicit research driven plans to add explicit evidence based strategies into their already strong standards and guidelines. The applicant's response is high quality and substantially implemented, with noted expansion to strengthen their current statewide system.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	15	13

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

C (2) (a) MSDE selected the Work Sampling System (WSS) in part as it provided " Omnibus Guidelines" Preschool to Grade 5, which greatly facilitated the alignment from preschool through kindergarten. MSDE customized the WSS by incorporating fall and spring early learning benchmarks for preschool (3-year olds), prekindergarten (4-year olds), and kindergarten. The applicant demonstrates their current informed work on a selection of screeners for early identification of special needs to be used throughout the state. To do so, they describe their process that involved a work group to identify appropriate screeners for special needs. Further evidence of their commitment and robust approach was provided by an informed listing of criteria they used to do so. As a result they have identified 4 instruments that meet their criteria and will be made available in early 2012. These will next be recommended to the State's Early Childhood Advisory Council for review by parents, child care providers and pediatricians. Additionally the applicant presents a plan to identify and/or develop formative assessments collaboratively with the Ohio Department of Education. Their design will be customized for and applicable across age groups, settings, and reflect their school readiness benchmarks (MMSR) (b) The applicant describes several current and planned methods that will effectively and efficiently provide the number and quality of those trained to conduct and understand the use of and information provided by assessments. They provided strong evidence of ongoing professional development efforts across the state. These trainings are currently being provided by a cohort of statewide approved trainers. They state their specific plans to ramp up those trained to reliability to meet their anticipated additional needs, thus providing a commitment to increasing statewide capacity of skilled trainers. They describe how they will continue training in formative assessments that is aligned with their curriculum and standards. This informed approach includes pre-administration, administration and post-administration. They are savvy in their approach, suggesting they will use face to face and online access for training to increase their numbers. To further ensure successful use of their comprehensive assessment system the applicant offers plans to continue training in formative assessments that is aligned with their standards. To do so, they describe a thorough approach that includes pre-administration, administration and post-administration.

Impressively and with reference to the newly embedded use of CLASS, the applicant describes a thoughtful process they will use that will statistically improve inter-rater reliability. (d) The applicant offers their plan for a statewide system that will support their assessment system as part of EXCELS (TQRIS). This plan includes coordination across preschool systems and upward with public school systems. This will be done across preschool contexts and programs through their MMSR statewide professional development system and upward by pre k educators articulating information to schools. Recommendations based on assessment results will offer specific referrals and follow up. This demonstrates one of the many ways that their comprehensive assessment is specifically informed by the National Academy of Sciences recommendations on early childhood assessments. Additional indicators of the quality of Maryland's plan to infuse comprehensive assessment include their process to analyze their current services. Through analysis they are aware and have made provisions to increase the number and frequency of these training opportunities for licensed providers. It is noted that currently the state system of resource and referral cannot meet the existing or anticipated needs. The applicant provides a high quality plan that is substantially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

C 3 (a) The applicant provides a chart that demonstrates their progression of standards for center and home based child care to ensure children's health and safety, including health and behavioral screening and follow-up that is impressively comprehensive. Notably, these supports and protocols are embedded within their program standards birth - through age five. An additional strength the applicant has shown a strong commitment to measuring and supporting the mental health foundations of school readiness. A notable feature of this is their consistent use of the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning known as SEFEL, and a state Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate Program. This strength also speaks to criteria C 3 a and b, as their approach serves to offer training specifically in SEFEL to early educators as part of their statewide professional development options. (b)The applicant documents several effective approaches to demonstrate their commitment to the healthy growth and development of preschoolers. Their approach additionally demonstrates their ability to leverage funds and resources to support their commitment. These include funded initiatives such as "Take 15 for the Health of It" for child care programs and families; "Keeping Kids Fit and Safe" for emergency preparedness, menu planning and health and safety concerns, and specific infant and toddler nutrition content embedded within their existing menu of training modules. (c) The applicant effectively describes how specific training modules are focused on the nutritional needs of infants and toddlers. The applicant further describes their procurement of additional funding to improve nutrition and physical activity in child care settings through the United States Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program. Another noted strength within their state is that, through their TQRIS, licensed providers are supported and rewarded to develop and implement wellness policies. Current core knowledge for licensed providers requires specified hours specific to health and nutrition as part of the state accreditation process. (d) These current and planned supports for increased support and resources are likely to enable the state to achieve their stated ambitious goals, making them achievable as well. The high needs populations served via their proposed scale up of Judy Centers will serve a specific number of children who have demonstrated needs. As this number will be a constant based on funded enrollment, the applicant provides solid evidence that they intend to apply all quality measures and guidance regarding use of their screening measures, referrals and up to date well child care. Given the supports and process described by the applicant, these goals are both ambitious and achievable.

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

C4 (a) The applicant offers a comprehensive approach to implementing their appropriate standards for family engagement. These engagement plans are consistent with and incorporated within their entire approach. Their Program Standards include activities for families to support their child's education and development. Much evidence is shared to convey this. The applicant embeds family engagement with cultural sensitivity throughout their TQRIS. It is a feature of Levels 2 - 5 with increasingly robust features as the steps progress. Their comprehensive plan includes parent education opportunities, curriculum input, and parental understanding for the assessment process. Transitioning to the next educational step for their child is another important feature that the applicant has addressed. To better address cultural sensitivity, the applicant offers a well-developed plan to convene community forums to reflect the cultural diversity represented in communities and to ensure they have a voice. Maryland offers evidence that they have historically provided parents with support in understanding the importance of quality child care including key identifiers. Another noted strength is their proposed connection of the states Head Start grantees and their Judy centers to provide a network of family support services for children with disabilities. Using the newly developed Family and Community Engagement Framework developed by the Office of Head Start, Maryland proposes to develop a Coalition of Family Engagement jointly shared to be tasked with this effort by the Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education (Early Childhood Advisory Council). Specifically they will be expected to develop a plan for customizing the Parent, Family, and Community Framework to the needs of Maryland, specifically its inclusion in the TQRIS, MMSR, grant opportunities. Most impressively, they describe their plans to develop 24 local early childhood advisory councils to increase their specific cultural sensitivities within high need communities with diverse populations. These local councils will be guided and evaluated with support of the Annie E Casey Foundation demonstrating leveraging of resources. Another leveraging opportunity they will implement is their partnership with pediatricians. Other notable strategies and partnerships noted are those with libraries and the scale up of Learning Parties within Title 1 school districts. (b) The applicant provides evidence they will be increasing numbers and percentages of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies. Impressively, each strategy has a plan for training early educators or where appropriate others in the field to implement the family engagement strategy or model with knowledge and to maintain fidelity. The Family Engagement Coalition is charged with coordination of implementation including this training. (c) The applicant offers a unique, comprehensive, and research and evidence based plan to ramp up their current statewide involvement in family support and engagement. They demonstrate an ability to leverage other statewide programs. For example, this aspect of their proposed work will use funding from maternal and infant home visiting programs, family serving agencies such as libraries, and health care providers. Additionally they effectively demonstrate their outreach to families in varied child care settings. However, friend and neighbor caregivers are not addressed. The applicant provides a high quality plan for statewide family engagement guidelines and strategies that currently are partially implemented.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

D (1) (a) The applicant effectively describes how they will in a planful and comprehensive way use their already existing statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. Maryland has a fully completed and implemented defined Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework for meeting not only the minimal state licensing standards but additionally offers a complete ladder for career progression. This progression is reflected in their TQRIS and accreditation process, and is aligned with their state Institutions for Higher Learning at the associates and bachelor's degree level and impressively within their teacher certification system. The applicant describes their strong historical commitment to this cohesive approach. Beginning as early as 1992, these competencies have been reviewed and revised in consideration of best practice in professional preparation. These workforce competencies are outlined in the specific courses required to meet minimum state licensing requirements through the completion of coursework in child growth and development. (b) A statewide progression of credentials and degrees that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is in effect in Maryland. This was done in 2001 when the Maryland Child Care Credential was established in response to a legislative initiative to reform early education. In the first year of implementation, 358 credentials were awarded. Currently more than 12,000 credentials have been issued to child care providers across Maryland. As of August 2011, they document 6,229 credentialed participants, an increase of 914 or 14.6 percent over last year. This credential has increased from four to six levels of professional achievement in education, experience, and professional activity. These increased steps recognize that the career ladder spans from minimum training requirements for teaching aides to master teachers holding four year degrees in early childhood education or additional post secondary education. In its current form, a Level 4+ was added to establish a bridge between the completion of the initial four steps and the additional and more credit-based levels. Upper levels provide for three separate pathways to reach the same credentialing standard. This flexibility was added to accommodate a workforce with a wide range of academic and field-based experiences. The Maryland Child Care Credential builds on the pre-service training required of persons working in the child care field and offers focused training in the core of knowledge areas (Child Development; Curriculum; Health, Safety and Nutrition; Special Needs; Professionalism; and Community). (c) The applicant documents the long-standing relationship between the State's early childhood community and the post-secondary institutions, its teacher education programs, and, more recently, research institutes. They document existing articulation agreements with the two- and four-year higher education institutions in the State for four courses (child development, curriculum planning, special education and administration of child care programs). Another important strategy in increasing the number of Maryland's qualified early childhood educators is the Associates of Arts Degree in Teaching in Early Childhood Education (AATECE). It is designed to make teacher education more affordable while maintaining the level of quality in teacher preparation. Program performance outcomes for these institutions are based on the standards for teacher preparation program approval at the MSDE as well as standards from the following organizations: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC); National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Head Start; and Council of Exceptional Children (CEC). This model is indeed an exceptional approach to engaging the support and alignment of Institutes of Higher Education. The applicant provides an exceptional plan that is of high quality and demonstrates their current plan is fully implemented and will be the foundation for their proposed updated improvements.

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

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 Maryland's system enables all early childhood educators, regardless of the type of early care and education they provide, to access professional development opportunities that enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting the state's early learning standards. Their seven levels of the Maryland Child Credentialing Program, reflect a career ladder which spans from the level of a teacher's aide to the completion of four-year degrees and additional postsecondary education. Maryland proposes to create an alternative pathway for individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and wish to obtain state certification for teaching. Maryland proposes to establish an annual Leadership in Early Learning Academy for school teams and leaders from early learning and development programs. Since the State will be implementing the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics in school year 2012/13, there is need to ensure consistent application of the new standards. The current Race to the Top award for Maryland included regional Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Academies for school teams from elementary and secondary schools. Maryland proposes in the state's high-quality plan an extension of The Leadership in Early Learning Academies as a complementary strategy that would enable early childhood educator growth in leadership. (b) Maryland proposes to increase funding for improving the qualifications of early childhood educators. The State has established a four-pronged approach to stimulate improvement in that sector through the Child Care Credentialing program. The approach consists of: A scholarship program called the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund; Articulation for child care pre-service credits between local school systems and community colleges; Training Voucher/Reimbursement for continuing education; and Program Accreditation Support to enhance the professionalism among staff in programs that pursue and obtain state and national program accreditation. These incentives have proven effective and support the TQRIS infrastructure for Maryland EXCELS. Most impressively, they have helped address a serious deficiency in the field – the lack of qualified personnel in licensed child care programs. (c) The MSDE Division of Early Childhood Development currently reports aggregated data for participation in the Child Care Credentialing Program. These data include the total number of program participants and the total number of program participants credentialed at each level per year, both for child care centers and family child care homes. Chart D-2 is a sample of the information that is provided to the public about participation rates in the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program. (1) Through Maryland's training approval process and development of standard workforce competencies, all Maryland postsecondary institutions and professional development providers develop and provide training that is aligned to the workforce knowledge and competency framework. Tabular information is used as further evidence of their successful methods. (2) Maryland's Child Care Credentialing program participation has seen steady, and accelerated, growth. By offering of an array of incentives and supports, Maryland has set ambitious and achievable targets to increase the number and percentage of early childhood educators progressing to higher levels. In this historically informed way the applicant established ambitious and achievable performance measures that are indeed achievable given their strong plan across systems and use of their solid and cohesive early education TQRIS, accreditation, and articulated work with state Institutes of Higher Learning. Maryland has an impressively implemented plan to support their early childhood workforce (fully implemented). Their enhanced plans will use this solid infrastructure to ramp up the knowledge, skills, and competencies to reflect current research and readiness initiatives. The applicant's response is scored as high quality and substantially implemented with planned enhancements.

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	20
<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>		

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 (a) The applicant has an existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) that has been in place since 2001. Current work is driven by their State Board's adoption of the Common Core Standards which in turn is driving the development of new assessment programs for grades 3-8. Maryland plans to collaborate with the State of Ohio to complete the new KEA by 2013 for the field test and 2014 for a full administration. Maryland's current Kindergarten Entry Assessment is called the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR Kindergarten Assessment) and is based on an adaptation of Pearson's Work Sampling System™ (WSS), a valid and reliable portfolio-based assessment system that helps teachers document and evaluate children's skills, knowledge. Their current KEA is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all essential domains of learning, as defined by RTT-ELC. (b) The applicant effectively describes how their existing system meets content validity criteria. In addition, MSDE developed its reliability and validity report based on the 2001 -2002 assessment results. The applicant describes in an effective manner their commitment to developing teacher knowledge and ability to discern children's skills and behaviors based on carefully documented observation. As an example, they focus teachers in their work with children who are English Language Learners on their being sensitized to record observations on skills that are not dependent on language proficiency. In addition, with regard to children with special needs teachers, were trained to coordinate with special education teachers in recording their observations and to take progress on the students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) into consideration as part of the on-going assessment. In this way, the applicant offers an exceptional plan to continue their intentional commitment to a fully operational KEA. (c) The new KEA will be administered to all children who enter public school kindergarten programs during the fall of the 2014-15 school year. Data from the administration of the KEA across all seven domains of learning will be captured in an online data system. Teachers will gather student assessment information over the first 10 weeks of the school year and will be required to submit their assessment information, documenting outcomes relative to the benchmarks and results of the performance tasks in the online system. As part of the scale-up, teachers will participate in professional development activities and will be provided with technology-enhanced tools and supports. (d) The applicant describes how their existing KEA meets data collection and retrieval as specified by RTT-ELC and that when revised their new system will as well. Their data will be linked to the Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse. Within their proposal the applicant assures that all data security and privacy policies follow national business standards in these systems. It is noteworthy that the applicant recognizes and values the ability to link children's KEA scores to the experiences children had prior to kindergarten as they target and focus on children with high needs. They will use this ability to analyze results by demographic characteristics, location of the state, and prior early childhood programs experiences. As an example of this they described how information about results for children with disabilities/developmental delays has triggered a change in the state policies guiding early intervention services which led to extended option of IFSPs in the delivery of services for children with disabilities/developmental delays beyond the age of three to provide more inclusive settings and less restrictive environments that are more conducive to a holistic early learning experience for children with disabilities/developmental (e) Maryland has already committed state and Federal funding to the planning and development of the revised KEA. They suggest that since much of the groundwork has been laid, the revisions will mainly require the development of formative assessment items, performance tasks, updated benchmarks, and technology support. MSDE will continue to leverage funding across systems and further describe an increased ability to do so as they will use their increased data retrieval and aggregation capacity for reporting and funding opportunities. They offer an impressive example of this with reference to leveraging funds from the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) sources. The applicant demonstrates their understanding of fiscal responsibility as they describe how, through their collaboration with Ohio, they will share the costs for the development of the KEA and, once it is completed, they will make it available to other states. Thus, any initial costs through this grant will be amortized over time as other states buy into the KEA program. This has the potential of significantly informing and improving the early childhood field. Maryland has an existing system of KEA in place that is fully implemented. They propose an exceptional plan to enhance and update this with multistate implications. This criteria is scored as high quality, and substantially implemented.

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data

formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on E(2)

E 2 (a) The applicant describes how their current Longitudinal Data System (LDS) has all of the Essential Data Elements to support their proposed work. Specifically, their Early Childhood Data Warehouse is integrated as part of the State's LDS and the full project will be completed by early 2012. The State continues to enhance its existing Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) to fully complement the Early Childhood Data Warehouse and become operational to link children in publicly funded early childhood programs, collect and report program quality data on all types of early learning and development programs, and collect and report on child formative assessment information across publicly funded programs participating in Maryland EXCELS, the State's revised Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System. In this way, they describe an effective, informed and meaningful process to collect, retrieve and manage relevant and informative data statewide. (b) The applicant describes their effective and efficient system and how it meets business developed criteria established and offer the use of Oracle Business Intelligent Enterprise Edition (OBIEE) as evidence of this. Their Longitudinal Data System (LDS) includes widely held useful elements such as: a unique statewide child identifier; a unique statewide early childhood educator identifier; a unique program site identifier; child and family demographic information; and early educator demographic information. These criteria will enable useful, meaningful, and significant aggregation of data that can move their early childhood initiatives forward. (c) The LDS is structured to facilitate the exchange of data among participating State agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions. The LDS, and the ECDW in particular, are specifically designed to promote and enforce standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions, and to ensure data captured within the LDS database, regardless of whether those data are retrieved from a Participating State Agency, a Participating Program, or another entity, is fully functional. Building upon this solid foundation, the applicant describes the next level they will develop to maximize their data capacity. One noted enhancement described is their plan to develop web-based data dashboards and reports that can be used by early learning program administrators and educators, as well public education officials at all levels. They correctly identify this as having the potential to be used as the basis for engaging in quality improvements, making decisions, and setting policies. (d) The applicant describes the existing status of the architecture of their Public Portal and explains that though debuted, the portal has not yet been implemented. As developed, the portal will enable child care providers, child care staff, families receiving child care subsidies, and approved trainers to work directly with their records within the system. The relevance of this capacity is effectively explained as these records are used to determine eligibility for licenses, credentials, and benefits; to authorize services to families; and to process service invoices and make payments to child care programs. When implemented it is apparent from the applicant's evidence that the portal will streamline and improve the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of all system records related to the providers and consumers of child care services. Further enhancements to this public portal that are planned include expanded public portal transactions for families receiving child care subsidies to include online subsidy voucher applications, and expanded services for child care providers including online forms for subsidy payment invoicing, licensing variance requests, operating profile updates, and changes in staff employment status. (e). As described in their response to E 1 the applicant offers extensive assurance that their data system, as it exists today, and with proposed enhancements will continue to meet all Federal, State, and local privacy laws. In addition, the applicant provides assurances that the portal will meet strict security and legal standards for electronic signatures on required forms. Maryland has a data system for collecting and retrieving early childhood data in place that they plan to more fully integrate into their statewide longitudinal data system. They propose a high quality plan to enhance their currently implemented system.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	264

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	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 applicant provides evidence throughout their application that they have existing systems in place to understand the status of children's learning and development upon kindergarten entry. They impressively demonstrate how they use this data to inform, improve, and target their work towards improving accessibility and quality. They further offer creative and compelling ideas and specific strategies they will use to enhance their understanding specific to their targeted approach to High Needs preschoolers and their measurable improved school readiness status.

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

Maryland impressively and in a data rich way demonstrates how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning existing and proposed resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Maryland describes their plans to build on their impressive work to date to specifically improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. These were specifically and effectively addressed within each of the Focused Investment Areas addressed by the state. In a highly effective and compelling manner, the applicant provided evidence and commitment to meeting this absolute priority.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MD-5016

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:37 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. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing financial investment, participation numbers, existing legislation, and current status in key areas.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The State presents a high quality plan. Information provided throughout the narrative, tables and graphs demonstrate Maryland's strong commitment and documented efforts made to advance early learning and development for children with high needs. The State exhibits a strong foundation upon which to implement an ambitious, yet achievable early learning reform agenda that would result in a state system for early learning and development. In this section, the foundation is evidenced by: a strong funding commitment dedicated to children with high needs and an infrastructure that includes well developed data systems already successfully implemented. Furthermore, the consolidation of early learning and development programs under the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and creation of the Division of Early Childhood Development in 2005 support stronger leadership, coordination and accountability, improvement of programs, services, and policies to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and receive the support they need to succeed in school. MSDE has oversight of education policies for 24 local systems. The State regards this grant as a vehicle to complement and build on its existing efforts, and clearly outlines the focus points of its learning and development reforms: 1) Revising the current Early Learning Framework including guidelines for children under four years of age; 2) Refining the existing comprehensive set of assessments (i.e. kindergarten entry assessment, professional development and early intervention systems); 3) Implementing a tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System to improve the quality of all early care and education programs; 4) Developing a workforce prepared to engage young children and their families in promoting early learning and development; 5) Building a statewide early childhood data system that supports the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the state's early childhood education system. The financial investment from January 2007 to present is remarkable. The upward trend in budgeting since 2007 for early learning and development programs is evident. The reason for this trend was that all kindergarten programs in Maryland were extended to a full-day schedule, and all four-year old children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds gained the right to access publicly funded pre-kindergarten. The full financial impact of these changes, estimated to be close to \$250 million, was a result of the work of the Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (also known as the Thornton Commission). The Commission's recommendation for an increase in State aid resulted in passage of the Bridge to Excellence in

Public Schools Act in 2002 which called for full implementation in 2007. The Bridge to Excellence provision increased the funding for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten significantly and set the stage to improve school readiness. In the interest of simplicity, the Commission recommended consolidating State funding from a number of programs into the foundation funding per student and additional funding based on the number of three high needs populations (special education students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English proficiency) in each school system. State spending per child enrolled in public pre-kindergarten increased by 27 percent from \$3,207 in 2007 to \$4,116 in 2010. Statistical data evidence the State's efforts to increase the number of children with High-Needs participating in Early Learning and Development programs. In 2009, MSDE's Division of Special Education /Early Intervention services received an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) incentive grant to implement the IDEA part C Extended Option statewide. Maryland created public-private partnerships at Title 1 school attendance areas, named Judy Center Partnerships, to make a formal commitment to improve the school readiness skills of children with high needs under an agreement between the local school system and its early childhood partners. In 2009, Maryland also developed a Preschool for All business plan and established 11 pilot sites in licensed private child care settings to provide access to high quality programs for families with incomes below 300 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines who may not be eligible for Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten, or Child Care Subsidy programs. It is also noted that Maryland provides supplemental funding for Head Start and Early Head Start to operate summer programs. The State provides evidence of existing learning and development legislation, policies and practices. From 1999 to 2010 there were 17 Legislative and Executive Policy decisions taken. In the narrative and the multiple tables provided the State successfully describes full implementation of all the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system. In 1999 the Maryland General Assembly created a Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families charged with identifying and recommending strategies and policy reforms to address inter-departmental gaps, inconsistencies, and inefficiencies in services to children and families. The Joint Committee introduced legislation, titled the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Program with the following components to advance early education in Maryland: 1) Establishment of Judy Center Partnerships; 2) Dissemination of the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR); 3) Promotion of early childhood programs to pursue and complete national or state program accreditation. As additional evidence of implementation the State provides: 1) Development of Early Learning and Development Standards: Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children Birth to Three, precursor to Healthy Beginnings released in December 2010; 2) Promotion of health practices and family engagement strategies; 3) Development of Early Childhood Educators; 4) Development of an early childhood data system. The profile of all learning and development data systems currently used in the state (i.e. Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Electronic Licensing Inspection System (ELIS), MSDE Division of Accountability and Assessment Data System (DAADS), and MSDE Longitudinal Data System (LDS) provides documentation of the existence of a comprehensive and useful data system.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	17

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)
The State adequately describes the goals it has to improve outcomes for children with high-needs statewide. The information provided is supported by graphs and statistical data that evidence ambitious but very achievable goals. The State summarizes clearly the projects it intends to work on. Each project is successfully described and rationale for investing in them easy to understand. There are a total of 10 projects highlighted that constitute together an effective State Plan Reform Agenda that shows a credible path toward reaching the goals established and getting the outcomes expected. The State's summary of existing components and enhancements to be made as a result of the RTT-ELC State Plan assists the reviewer in getting a clear picture of the ideal early childhood system the state is seeking to build. In the narrative the State simply indicates its choices of selected criteria in Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E) but fails to elaborate as to why these selected criteria will assist in best achieving the goals set.

	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)

The State presents a high-quality plan, fully implemented. Maryland provides 53 detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from public and private stakeholders. Memoranda of Understanding reviewed demonstrate strong support, commitment and delineate clear roles and responsibilities. The State Level Interagency Governance structure is well described and easy to understand. The involvement of all three Councils (i.e. State Advisory Council of Early Care and Education "Early Childhood Advisory Council", State Interagency Coordination Council (SICC) and the Office of Childcare Advisory Council (OCC) as advisors in the implementation of the plan is commendable. The State makes reference to dispute resolution strategies in the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) by-laws (Appendix A3.1) however the information was missing.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13

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 in the narrative, tables and the charts provided successfully demonstrates the existence of funds that support early learning and development from Federal, private and local sources. It further adequately describes the activities and services that support the State's Plan conducted by each funding sources. The budget emphasizes the development of an infrastructure that is adjusted for accountability of high quality programs, early learning standards to align with common core standards, and a workforce that understands how to translate evidence-based early education into practice. The overall structure of the State's budget for implementing the State Plan is based on the responsibilities of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as the fiscal agent through which all funding will be distributed via contracts with vendors and Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating State Agencies, which include the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), and the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), will support project responsibilities under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) scope of work for each agency, to be implemented within 90 days after the award has been received. The State highlights the 10 projects elaborated and documents a sustainability plan for each project. Funding sources are also noted. Reviewer questions the non-allocation of funds past 2015 for Project 9: Leadership in Early Learning Academy, a project that would need to be ongoing since it is designed to support Title I schools with a significant high needs population.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The State presents a high quality plan, substantially implemented. Maryland State provides a clear description of the Maryland EXCELS, the revised Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) that it intends to fully implement for early education and learning programs by July 1, 2013 after the current pilot study and a field test in 2012. The State has since 2001 established and implemented a statewide TQRIS. Although participation in the tiered reimbursement program is voluntary, there are regulatory requirements that apply to program participation. The State describes with precision the goals aimed by the Maryland EXCELS: 1) More evidence-based criteria of quality 2) Increased participation (especially in areas of high need); 3) Increased incentives for families and providers; 4) Increased public awareness of the importance of high quality care; 5) Stronger validation of the system; and 6) Increased access to data for analysis and improvement. It was evident based on the information provided that the State EXCELS aligns with all components of a TQRIS relative to Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment System, Early Childhood Educator Qualifications, Family Engagement Strategies, Incentives and Effective Data Practices. Figure B-1 describes an easy to understand progression of standards for the Maryland EXCELS system. The availability of the EXCELS on-line management system supports a clearly defined, seamless pathway for quality rating and improvement for all subsets of programs. The EXCELS on-line management system is built to pull information from the Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) and has been designed to cross-walk with the State and National Accreditation standards and the Head Start Program Standards.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	13

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 State presents a high-quality plan, mostly implemented. The State demonstrates a clear path for promoting participation in the Maryland EXCELS, the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system. The state's goal of having all publicly funded early learning and development programs included in the Maryland EXCELS is well defined. It is evident that effective policies and practices are 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. It is reported that over the past ten years, Maryland has almost doubled the enrollment of children with high needs in publicly funded programs. Child Care Subsidy Program reimbursement rates have been increased twice since the transfer of Child Care to MSDE in 2005-2006 and co-payments for families have been kept at 10 percent of family gross income. Since 2007, all four-year olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have had access to enrollment at a public school pre-kindergarten. The State successfully describes its plan to use strategies, such as built in co-payment incentives for families, increased subsidy reimbursements, program quality bonuses, accreditation support, credentialing support and endorsement incentives to assist families and children of high-needs to participate in programs that are recognized for their quality. The benchmarks set are clear and achievable. In the area of Credentialing Support reviewer questions the rationale of the state to cut in half the credential bonus and training support available to individuals working in child care programs not participating in EXCELS. This is seen as a punitive decision for individuals that may have little or no power in the program's decision and who are not able to better themselves so they can seek employment in programs of higher quality.

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

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

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The State presents a medium-quality response, substantially implemented plan. Maryland presently uses the EXCELS database to capture all components of the system and also pre-populated information from programs registering to participate in EXCELS. Participation in EXCELS requires program administration and staff members to undertake some measure of self-evaluation, specifically to determine strengths and needs and also identify a starting point for program improvement. The State outlines a formal rating process only for programs that are achieving a Check Level 3 and 4. To achieve a Check Level 3, programs complete a formal self-evaluation using the appropriate Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) tool and submission of evidence to the online digital portfolio. Evaluation by a trained outside evaluator is only done at Check Level 4. For this level the State plans to have a three-level monitoring system in place where three different group of monitors review the program but the process outlined gives little confidence of its reliability since programs will be selected at random for this level of monitoring and evaluation. The State has already put in place a system to provide quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs and making program quality rating data, information and licensing history publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use. Maryland issues certificate to be displayed at the facility. Information about the rating of each child care facility will be available on the Check Child Care Maryland website. The information will also be available through the Maryland LOCATE:Child Care system offered through the child care resource and referral agencies and the EXCELS website. The EXCELS website, when fully operational, will provide information for interested programs, staff members, parents, and community partners.

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

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

- (a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);
- (b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and
- (c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--
 - (1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
 - (2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The State presents a high-quality plan, partially implemented. The State has established for the past ten years models of excellence throughout the elementary school years, but a concurrent set of strategies to ensure that under-resourced areas produce high quality programs has not been developed. Maryland clearly indicates its plan to develop and implement policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve. This is exemplified by the efforts of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Department of Human Resources to jointly establish and co-chair a Task Force on "Improving Early Learning for Children from Low Income and Disadvantaged Environments". The mission of this Task Force is clearly stated: 1) Examine the current case management policies, procedures and costs for children from low-income and disadvantaged environments, including the cost of child care for children with developmental delays/disabilities, who are English language learners, or who are migrant, homeless, or foster care children; 2) Review options of efficient management strategies, including the use of federal data systems to serve families eligible for child care subsidy vouchers. The State provides a comprehensive and well-thought-out overview of the many ways it plans to provide supports to help working families who have children with high-needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development programs through: 1) Quality capacity building in Title 1 attendance areas with the plan of having all programs participating in EXCELS to have access to coaching, mentoring and technical assistance as they move through the check levels, an approach currently used in Maryland's K-12 Race To The Top (RTT); 2) Early Childhood Breakthrough Center Approach which core work includes effective planning, examination of children's learning and development in the program and programmatic capacity building; 3) Extension of its models of excellence in communities of Title 1 schools (i.e. Judy Center Partnerships and Preschool for All sites); 4) Establishment of Community Hubs in highly under-resourced communities in Baltimore City. Community Hubs depend not only on multiple state funding sources but also on local, public, and private contributions. They offer services full-day, full-week, full-year including parenting education, health education and access to health care, employment readiness activities, adult education (GED, ESOL, external diploma, alternative high school, etc.) and facilitate access to services by offering service coordination, transportation, meals and non-traditional hours of operation.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The State describes with sufficient detail its High-Quality Plan to validate the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. It outlines the study aims, and describes a sound methodology and precise strategies with reasonable timelines and responsible units for each task outlined. Full sample and validation subsample data will be collected from an adequate number of programs participating. Data collection will include classroom observations, as well as parent and teacher questionnaires. In addition the researchers plan to conduct live observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

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.	15	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)

Maryland presents a high-quality response, fully implemented. The State provides in the narrative and tables a thorough plan to develop and use statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. There is evidence that the state's current early learning framework has two sets of standards that define what young children should know and be able to do within specified age spans: Maryland Healthy Beginnings: Supporting the Development and Learning from Birth through Three Years of Age and the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR). The content of Healthy Beginnings is aligned with the MMSR for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten and the Maryland State Curriculum making them an important part of a Birth to Grade 12 learning continuum. In Chart C1 the State provides a clear picture of the full range of domains of development across the State's birth through kindergarten standards and how they align with the State School Readiness and Head Start standards. The State adequately describes how 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. The MMSR curricular standards are represented in the Curriculum Standards of the program standards. These standards are being used to guide programs in pursuing and obtaining State accreditation. As part of the State's Early Childhood Curriculum Project, in 2009 the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) made it a requirement for programs receiving State or Federal funding through a grant administered by the Division of Early Childhood Development to choose one of the MSDE recommended early childhood curriculum options. It is evident that Maryland has strategic supports in place to promote the understanding of the early learning and development standards (i.e. MMSR Professional Development, MSDE Standards for High Quality Early Childhood Programs and Program Accreditation, Statewide network of on-site technical assistance through Infant and Toddler Specialists, State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy (Pre-Kindergarten to 2nd Grade). Maryland also proposes to 1) expand the Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Enrichment Through Stories (VIOLETS) language and literacy curriculum in early childhood programs in Title I schools in improvement attendance areas; 2) Implement two field tests of the Early Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Program for preschoolers in early learning and development programs, located in Title 1 attendance areas.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	15	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The State provides a high-quality response, partially implemented. Maryland has a plan which is not yet implemented to streamline the current comprehensive assessment system, Maryland EXCELS. This process is important as it will provide more consistency for four major purposes: identification of children with special needs, measuring progress of children's development and learning as the trajectory for school readiness (formative assessments, birth to 72 months), measuring improvement of quality of early childhood programs that are participating in Maryland EXCELS (environmental rating scales) and measuring teacher-child interaction and effectiveness of teaching (through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System or CLASS as the observation protocol of classroom observation used for program accreditation). The State exemplifies its commitment to working with parents, childcare providers and pediatricians by selecting instruments that fully involved them such as: the Ages and States Questionnaire (ASQ), the Parent Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS), the Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) and a local assessment, Best Beginnings developed by the University of Maryland School of Psychiatry for children from birth to three to identify potential concerns. Those screening tools recommended by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will complement the current Health Inventory which is required for each child at the time of enrollment in a licensed child care program, and the current Maryland's Early Childhood Intervention and Special Education Evaluation and Assessment System for children from birth to age five with disabilities/developmental delays. Ongoing professional development, training and coaching are strategies that are also evidenced in the State's plan.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	15	13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

Maryland has a high quality plan, substantially implemented. The State provides evidence that the Maryland EXCELS includes Health Progression of Standards that apply to center-based and family child care to ensure children's health and safety. The State does not satisfactorily demonstrate how it will ensure the increase in number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting physical health standards. The information provided mostly outlines guidelines and standards included in the Healthy Beginning and the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Framework and Standards but does not give much detail about support to early childhood educators. The State fully addresses the criteria in regard to Mental Health as exemplified by the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation Project, Promotion of nutrition is also well documented. The Maryland's Framework for Healthy Children successfully demonstrates participation in ongoing health care. The State's plan to start training, in 2013 and beyond, cohort of pediatricians on developmental screening practices in collaboration with families and development staff is exemplary. The State plans also to train pediatricians in first-line detection of early childhood mental health issues to identify these issues and intervene earlier

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	15	13

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 a high-quality response and substantially implemented plan. Maryland successfully describes a multitude of family engagement practices that support its commitment to serve families of children with high-needs. The Maryland EXCELS Family Engagement Progression of Standards evidence planned activities and policies related to all components. Examples of strong initiatives, since the 1980's, such as the creation of the Maryland Family Network (MFN) funded by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and LOCATE Child Care successfully prove the State's long-standing tradition of engaging families in their children's education, their own education and in becoming informed consumers of quality child care. The State recognizes its lack of an effective mechanism for coordinating the multitude of services provided and measuring outcomes in terms of family engagement. Therefore in its narrative, the State provided a comprehensive, well defined plan to do so. For example, the State proposes to form a Coalition of Family Engagement jointly chaired by MFN and the Maryland State Head Start Association charged with developing a plan for customizing the Parent, Family, and community Framework (PFCF) developed by the Office of Head Start to shape its family engagement policies. A critical role for the coalition will be the outreach to families who are not accessing existing early childhood programs. The Coalition will also be responsible for developing a mechanism for referral and intervention for families with children with disabilities/developmental delays and challenging behaviors. Maryland also plans to establish several statewide initiatives to engage families in the early learning and development of their children. Chart C-7 provides an outstanding summary of the strategies for Engaging and Supporting Families with defined timelines and responsible parties.

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 presents a high-quality response, fully implemented. Throughout the narrative, charts, tables provided, there is evidence of a well established common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. Workforce competencies were initially established in 1992 and have been revised in 2001 in consideration of best practice in professional preparation. In 2001 the Maryland Child Care Credential was established in response to a legislative initiative to reform early education. During the ten year history of the program, it is reported that more than 12,000 credentials have been issued. There is documented evidence of strong engagement of postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Presently the State has an articulation agreement with the two and four-year higher education institutions in the State for four courses (child development, curriculum planning, special education and administration of childcare programs). The State describes an important strategy in increasing the number of Maryland's qualified early childhood educators is the Associates of Arts Degree in Teaching in Early Childhood Education (AAT-ECE). The AAT-ECE was designed as a cost-effective approach to increase the number of degreed teachers in early childhood education. Maryland proposes to establish a review committee to examine the current status of the AAT-ECE to determine if it is still an effective workforce development tool.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	17

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)
The State provides a high-quality response, substantially implemented. Maryland Child Credentialing Program evidences a well established career ladder which spans from the level of a teacher's aide to the completion of four-year degrees and additional postsecondary education. Maryland's career ladder does not currently address the needs of early childhood educators who are working full-time and intend to obtain their state's teaching certification. To assist them, the State proposes to create an alternative pathway in collaboration with a State university to offer flexible course schedule, as well as on-line courses and allowing early childhood educators to work on-site at their existing place of employment throughout their entire internship. The establishment of an annual Leadership in Early Learning Academy for school teams and leaders from early learning and development programs is another valuable initiative that the State proposes in its plan. Efforts of the State to implement policies and incentives that promote professional improvement and career advancement deserve to be noted as they are designed to increase retention and provide financial assistance: 1) Scholarship program: the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund; 2) Articulation for child care pre-service credits between local school systems and community colleges; 3) Training Voucher/Reimbursement for continuing education; 4) Program Accreditation Support.

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

20

20

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)

Maryland presents a high-quality response fully implemented. The State provides ample information as to the history, development and implementation of its current Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA): the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMR) Kindergarten Assessment. Maryland had been implementing the KEA since 2001 and is based on an adaptation of Pearson's Work Sampling System (WSS). In its High Quality Plan for this grant, the State proposes to collaborate with the State of Ohio to complete a new KEA by 2013 for the field test and 2014 for full census administration. The MMR Kindergarten Assessment is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers seven domains of learning. In November of the year children enter school, teachers rate them on 30 WSS indicators and they are identified as: Fully Ready, Approaching Readiness, and Developing Readiness. To help guide teachers' thinking in the assessment process the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed guidelines called MMSR Exemplars for all indicators in each of the seven domains of learning and trained teachers on how to use them to assess their students fairly. The process of collaboration with the State of Ohio is clearly and precisely outlined. The State adequately demonstrates how it will link the KEA and formative assessments to the Longitudinal Data System (LDS)/Early Childhood Data Warehouse. In addition, the State provides some great information on how the existing Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Maryland Online Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) and the Maryland Special Education Early Childhood Accountability System generate data that are fed into the Maryland's enhanced Special Services Information System and the LDS/Early Childhood Data Warehouse and thus ensure information sharing for children with special needs in compliance with data security and privacy policies. The information provided supports the State's acknowledgment that it has already committed state and federal funding to the planning and development of the revised KEA. It also provides information about how the collaboration with Ohio and desire to share the model with other states will facilitate sharing of costs for this project.

	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)

Maryland presents a high-quality response, substantially implemented. In this section, the State describes a sophisticated yet easy to comprehend system for building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. Maryland has been developing its Early Childhood Data Warehouse as part of the State's Longitudinal Data System (LDS). The project is scheduled to be completed by early 2012. The State continues to enhance its existing Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) to fully complement the Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) and become operational to link children in publicly funded early childhood programs, collect and report program quality data on all types of early learning and development programs, and collect and report on child formative assessment information across publicly funded programs participating in Maryland EXCELS, the State's revised Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System. The LDS uses Oracle Business Intelligence Enterprise Edition (OBIEE) to capture and report data and will have geo-mapping capability. The LDS houses the ECDW which in turn will be fully aligned and interoperable with all levels and aspects of the LDS and will be permission based to allow different set of users to access and interact with information in various ways and will contain all of the essential data elements. An online record-keeping system for licensed child care programs that uses Oracle's APEX application is being housed within the ECDW to serve as a single-point system for recording data about staff employment, child enrollment and attendance and classroom assignment of staff and children. Information provided demonstrates how the LDS will enable uniform data collection and easy entry of the essential data elements by participating State agencies and participating programs by using standard data structures, data formats and data definitions. The State acknowledges that its current data transparency policy that is specific to the LDS/ECDW still needs to be established. It is evident that the LDS meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	252

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	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 has already implemented a well functioning Kindergarten Assessment that it plans to enhance in collaboration with the State of Ohio.

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 State demonstrates a great approach, and provides assurances that it will be successful in its efforts to build and implement a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with high-needs so they can be ready to enter Kindergarten and succeed. It deserves to be noted that the State's current sets of standards for infants and toddlers, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children (the Healthy Beginnings and the Maryland Model for School Readiness) are aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum making them an important part of a Birth to Grade 12 learning curriculum. The State's ability to engage postsecondary institutions and other professionals development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is commendable. The State's financial commitment to the enhancement of early learning and development is considerable.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MD-5016

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:34 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. Includes detailed text description of the core area and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Overall, the state's response details a strong history of funding, commitment, and service to early childhood education and development, particularly for children with high needs. In particular, the state has implemented a statewide kindergarten entry assessment that meets the definition for addressing all domains of school readiness, serves a high percentage of high needs children through its state-funded preschool, and has established data systems to track outcomes and program information over time. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range.*** (a) Maryland's history of financial investment in early childhood programs and systems is strong. Chart A-1 details the budget increases for the department of education (housing and overseeing public education, CCDF, licensing) since 2007. Although the budget breakdown in Table (A)(1)-4 describes some decreases in the state's supplemental funding, the state has been able to consistently serve the population of children with high needs through the state funded preschool programs. This state has consistently exceeded CCDF state match.*** (b) The state has demonstrated a commitment to serving children with high needs, as demonstrated in Table (A)(1)-5. Although this number has not increased significantly since 2007, the state is serving a relatively high percentage of children already (in 2010, there were 41,374 children aged 3-5 in the state, and 26,147 were enrolled in state-funded preschool alone). *** (c) Chart A-5 outlines the state's history of commitment to aligning, supporting, and increasing early childhood services available to the state's children. Of particular note are the efforts to bring programs serving young children together within the state's department of education, and the expansion to provide universal access to prekindergarten services for children from low-income families.*** (d) The state's current status in the key areas as defined by the grant is strong. Standards are in place for prekindergarten (aligned with the public school standards) and guidelines are in place for programs serving B-3. Although assessment in all key areas takes place, systems are not fully aligned across the state, with differing requirements for type of preschool provider existing even within the same program (for example, within the top tiers of TQRIS, only public school programs are required to have the CLASS assessment). Promotion of health practices and family engagement are less consistent statewide; however, the state has developed some innovative programs to coordinate services in support of families with high needs, such as the Judy Centers, targeted in Title I attendance areas. Maryland's framework for supporting educators and incentivizing professional

development has resulted in good alignment with pre-service credential providers, although there is a smaller percentage of professionals holding available credentials. Maryland has already implemented a statewide kindergarten entry assessment which assesses all required domains of school readiness. Data systems are already in place to collect and integrate information regarding child care subsidy, licensing inspections, information on program quality, kindergarten entry assessment outcomes, and provider information. Further, links are in place with the K-12 system to track children and programs longitudinally.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	17

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state outlines ambitious and achievable goals in the area of increased kindergarten readiness outcomes and narrowing of the achievement gap prior to kindergarten entry. The state also clearly outlines each project proposed within the application. However, the links between the ambitious and achievable goals with each of the proposed projects and the choice of FIAs is left to implication and is not well outlined. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) The state's plan outlines specific, detailed, ambitious goals for increasing outcomes for children and addressing the readiness gap at kindergarten entry, along with the rationale to support their achievable nature. Of particular significance was the state's breakdown of goals for different sub-sections of children with high needs, demonstrating a thoughtful, thorough approach to understanding and approaching the individual needs of these differing populations responsively. The state's overall goal, to increase kindergarten readiness to 92%, is both ambitious and achievable. However, the state does not set specific goals for increasing program quality, or other areas likely to impact school readiness.*** (b) The state outlines an overall summary of the projects to be included in the plan. This outline is excellent and details a comprehensive reform agenda which addresses each key focus area as defined by the grant program. However, although it is implied that enhancements across all key areas will contribute to increased kindergarten readiness, it is not well-articulated how the selected projects will contribute directly to the goals of increased percentages of children who are "fully ready" according to composite scores or the language/literacy scores on the kindergarten entry assessment. *** (c) In Chart A-1, the state outlines their choice of FIAs for this proposal and explains how each relates to the projects explained in subsection (b). The rationale for each of the FIAs is very strong. However, as in subsection (b), the connections between the rationale and specific goals set in subsection (a) is not well-articulated.

	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)

The state has a strong plan to build on existing governance and decision-making structures for administration, oversight, dispute resolution and procedures for including stakeholder input. This plan is already implemented and operational in the state. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range.*** (a) The state's response outlines how governance will be organized, should a grant be awarded, based on the existing infrastructure within Maryland state department of education (which oversees all education and child care functions for the state). The state explains the existing system of councils and advisory boards, as well as a plan to establish local advisory councils throughout the state to support the implementation of grant activities. Roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined in Table (A)(3)-1. The state plans to use existing policies and procedures for legislation introduction and dispute resolution, as well as maintain stakeholder input procedures already in place. The state's response also details the process of including stakeholder input in the development of the proposal, demonstrating the strength of the procedures already in place. *** (b) Participating state agencies' MOUs (Appendices) are in place to outline the terms and conditions of the agreements, as well as scopes-of-work for each party. MOUs reflect high levels of commitment (MOU with Governor's Office did address funding preservation); however, a specific reference to maximizing program participation was not noted.*** (c) Maryland's letters of support demonstrated support from a variety of stakeholders, including legislators, the state of Ohio's DOE, institutes of higher education, early childhood advocates and educational organizations, and support from the business community and private sector.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13

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's budget, narrative, and plan for sustainability are comprehensive and reasonable. Allocation of funds across projects and participating state agencies is likely to effect change, especially in the area of program improvement. The plan for sustaining the TQRIS following the grant period is less well-developed. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range.*** (a) The state's plan outlines Maryland's current funding according to the source and purpose for which the funds will be directed in implementing the projects described by this proposal. Information is thoughtfully presented and indicates a comprehensive overview of current programs and efforts to maximize existing funding streams: Chart A-8 links funding sources with grant activities and Table (A)(4)-1 projects spending through the grant period.*** (b) Budget tables and narratives are thorough, project-by-project accounts of spending according to participating state agency. Funding seems adequate, and notably directed towards the enhancement of the TQRIS system and the "quality capacity building" designed to improve program quality. These two expenditures are likely to impact the school readiness goals that the state set out in criterion (A)(2) by investing in the state's mechanism to identify, communicate, and improve levels of early childhood quality available across the state. Significant funds are also allocated for the establishment of local early childhood advisory councils, which will help strengthen regional leadership and build implementation and coordination capacity.*** (c) The state is reasonable and realistic in its description of continued programming following the grant period. Based on strong existing funding structures (see (a) above), the state plans to be able to sustain many of the projects once RTT-ELC comes to a close. Only the implementation of the TQRIS system is not accounted for in the state's sustainability plan, although the proposal outlines a plan to bring together a group to examine the feasibility of continuing this program closer to the budget period for which it would be needed.

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)

Maryland has developed a high quality, substantially implemented plan for a TQRIS that meets the federal requirements outlined by this application. The program standards reflect high expectations, are measurable, and are well aligned with licensing as their basis. However, differential requirements for different program type weakens the TQRIS's ability to meaningfully differentiate between tiers (see (b) below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range.*** (a) The state's plan for redesigning the existing TQRIS system to better align with the state definition is strong. Each area of the required program standards is addressed by Maryland's plan for revision: incorporation of early learning standards, comprehensive assessment systems, early childhood educator qualifications, family engagement strategies, health promotion, and effective data practices (Chart B-1 outlines these requirements). One strength of the revisions is ensuring that all early learning and

education programs have access to participation in this voluntary system (as in, there are provisions to support participation for all program types). *** (b) The state's standards are measurable, and reflect high expectations of program quality across multiple program types. The standards utilize measurement tools and information linked to the kinds of program quality shown to impact learning outcomes for young children (for example: teacher qualifications, environmental quality, ratio). However, it is not clear why different program types have differential requirements at the same "check level" (for example, in Head Start and public preschool, the CLASS is required for top tier check levels, while this is not the case for community-based child care programs). *** (c) Maryland's TQRIS is well-linked to the licensing system because it establishes a license in good standing as the foundation of the TQRIS, and involves licensing specialists in the monitoring and referral process for the TQRIS system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Maryland's substantially implemented plan for increasing participation in the TQRIS is ambitious and achievable, given the state's decision to keep the program voluntary. There is a strong system of supports and incentives in place to encourage participation and enrollment in high needs areas, which will be critical to meeting the goals set forth for TQRIS participation. However, the state has chosen not to set the goal of having all publicly funded programs participate in the TQRIS. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) Maryland did not set the goal to have all publicly funded programs participating in the TQRIS system. Instead, the state's goals are to keep the program voluntary and gradually increase participation among different program types, with 27% of programs participating by 2015. This 25% increase, although ambitious given the non-mandatory nature of the program, does not meet the requirement for this sub-criterion.*** (b) The state's plan has a variety of strong strategies designed to help more families afford high quality child care and to target high-need areas for quality improvement. These include increases in subsidy reimbursement rates, a system of tiered reimbursement based on program quality, a bonus structure based on percentage of high-needs children served in a program, co-payment incentives for families choosing high quality care, and a series of supports and incentives for early childhood educators increasing their credentials and training. *** (c) Maryland's goals for increasing number and percentages of programs participating in the TQRIS system can be considered ambitious given the fact that the state has chosen to maintain the voluntary nature of the program. The strong incentive structure in place at all levels (program, educator, and family) and a plan for public awareness will help to drive participation levels up organically, rather than mandating participation. A 25% increase in participation overall is ambitious, and with the supports and incentives in place, achievable.

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

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

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Maryland's substantially implemented plan to make information on quality ratings and licensing information accessible and easy to understand by parents is very strong. In addition, the state plans to use reliable and valid measurements as part of the TQRIS system. However, there is a lack of depth and detail regarding procedures for maintaining consistency between monitors and establishing interrater reliability, as well as specifics regarding monitoring visits (see (a) below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state's plan includes using valid and reliable tools to measure environmental quality (ERS) and in some program types, teacher-child interactions (CLASS). In addition, there are some procedures to validate the accuracy of information and artifacts submitted in support of a program's application for TQRIS participation (random spot checks for accuracy). The state explains that Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) evaluators will have achieved reliability with state anchors. However, it is not explained how frequently the monitors will be recalibrated, how the state anchors themselves are monitored, whether the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observers will have similar procedures, and whether the EXCELS monitors (who do on-site evaluation of artifacts and other program documents) will be monitored or trained to consistency with one another. The frequency with which monitoring visits will take place appears appropriate, but other information regarding monitoring is missing, for example, the number of classrooms slated to be observed during visits, or how a sample of classrooms would be selected.*** (b) The state's plan to make information on licensing and quality rating information available to parents is strong, and already linked to the child care resource and referral system. The state already has a website in place to capture licensing information and the quality rating information is also available on this site (Child Care Automated Tracking System: CCATS). Additionally, the TQRIS itself will have a website portal for parents containing information from CCATS along with other parent information provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

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

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

- (a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);
- (b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and
- (c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--
 - (1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
 - (2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Although the state outlines a strong, substantially implemented plan to support quality improvement in participating programs and incentivize such program improvement, there are inconsistencies in targets for number and percentage of participation among programs and children, which weakens the quality of this response. For example, Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)-1 sets the goal of including 3,097 programs in TQRIS by 2015. However, the total number of programs projected to be participating in TQRIS in 2015 according to Performance Measure (B)(2)(c) is only 1113 programs. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. *** (a) Maryland has a strong system of tiered reimbursements, bonuses, and marketing strategies in place to incentivize and promote quality improvement for programs (see (B)(2)(b) above). Additionally, the state's plan also provides the support necessary to facilitate quality improvement in programs. Some of these supports include funding for educators to increase their credential levels, assistance with fees associated with national accreditation, and grant funding for equipment and materials associated with state accreditation.*** (b) The state has supplemented funding to extend Head Start through the summer, which is a strong strategy to support working families. The state also plans to expand its current work through "quality capacity building". This effort takes different forms in different communities—enhancing the EXCELS technical assistance in Title 1 neighborhoods available through the local child care resource and referral, establishing Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers to coordinate program improvement technical assistance and incentives, and extending the community support alignment models already in existence across the state (Judy Centers, Preschool For All, and Community Hubs). These community-based models are designed to meet the needs of working families to align services and ensure comprehensive supports for families with young children. However, the rationale for utilizing so many different models across the state is not clear. *** (c) Maryland's goals for increasing the numbers of programs in the top tiers of its TQRIS are ambitious and Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1) accounts for all eligible programs across the state (3097, although in criterion B2, the state lists that there are 5122 programs that are CCDF funded alone). However, in Performance Measure (B)(2)(c), the state outlined its targets for TQRIS participation in 2015 much differently (setting the goal of having 1113 programs total participating in TQRIS). The goals for increasing enrollment in the top tiers are equally unclear. In this subsection, the state plans to increase enrollment in top tier programs significantly, which seems unlikely to be achievable given the information presented in criterion B2. According to the goals set forth for participating programs in B2, there would not be sufficient capacity in top tier programs (with the goal of 19% of CCDF funded programs in top tiers) to meet the goals of top-tier enrollment outlined in section B4 (having 57% of children in top tier CCDF funded programs). These inconsistencies lower the quality of the state's response in this section.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	9

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state's plans for validation of the tiers of EXCELS and for examining the association between program change and child learning and outcomes have potential. However, there is a lack of detail regarding how the research goals as outlined by the state will meet the requirements of this criterion. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. *** (a) Maryland plans to undertake an evaluation plan with three primary goals: describe program quality for participants, examine relationships between quality indicators and child growth and outcomes, and to examine program change as a result of EXCELS activity. The state's proposal refers to the first of these goals (describe program quality) as the "validation study". In particular, this evaluation effort plans to examine associations between observed teacher child interactions (using CLASS), known to impact children's learning outcomes, with indicators of quality outlined by EXCELS. Although this may lend validity to the program quality indicators selected by the EXCELS program standards, it is not clear how this will lend validity to the distinctive "quality check" levels identified by the TQRIS as it has been redesigned, which is the requirement of this sub-criterion.*** (b) The state's plan to examine the associations between program change and child learning is stronger. Maryland is in a unique position to associate changes in program quality with increased kindergarten readiness (having baseline data already in place through the Maryland kindergarten entry assessment). Following a subsection of the sample over the course of their TQRIS participation is a strength because of the potential to yield important change-over-time information depending on the levels of support the program received.

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.	15	13
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

Maryland has strong early learning standards in place for both 4 year olds and B-3. The standards are culturally/linguistically appropriate and align with the elementary standards. The state plans to strengthen the early learning standards' implementation by refining its social and personal development domain and boosting the application of the standards through two new programs for Title 1 schools and the development of a guide to pedagogy for early childhood educators. The state's plan is substantially implemented, but its response does not directly address how the early learning standards are incorporated into the TQRIS framework (although it does address the program accreditation standards). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) The state's response provides evidence that the Early Learning Standards address all of the essential domains of school readiness (Chart C-1). Standards are broken down by age group with benchmarks and associated activities to promote learning and development. Standards were reviewed by national experts and a local advisory group to ensure appropriateness for cultural and linguistic diversity. *** (b) Early Learning Standards were developed to align with the K-12 system, as part of an overall alignment process incorporating prekindergarten into the K-12 system (now P-12 system). In addition, the voluntary state curriculum for P-8 aligns the early learning standards for 4 year olds with the B-3 standards. Further alignment and refinement will be finalized in December 2011.*** (c) Early Learning Standards are incorporated into the state's early childhood efforts across curricula, assessment, and professional development activities. The state's accreditation process (which is related to the TQRIS, although the state's response does not directly reference the TQRIS tiers) requires the use of a curriculum aligned with the accreditation standards, and all programs receiving public funding must select an approved curriculum approach that aligns with the state's standards. The kindergarten readiness assessment currently used in the state is customized for alignment with the standards as well. Professional development (including the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework) is embedded with the standards.*** (d) Maryland supports the dissemination and professional development surrounding the early learning standards. The state provides guidance on curriculum selection (to ensure alignment), conducts professional development on the kindergarten readiness assessment system (which is aligned with the standards), and requires the use of the early learning standards when programs are seeking state accreditation. The B-3 standards are used by the statewide network of Infant-Toddler specialists who provide technical assistance (including education and support for use of the appropriate standards) directly to programs serving children B-3. This approach is comprehensively in place, and the state also plans to continue expanding the commitment to the early learning standards in participating programs through the development of a guide to early childhood

pedagogy. This guide will support educators in all settings to utilize the standards through toolkits and strategies for classroom implementation. The state plans to implement two projects to further support the use of early learning standards in classrooms: VIOLETS (a story-based vocabulary and oral language intervention for ELL students) and a supplemental science curriculum, both to be implemented in Title 1 schools, and target children with high needs.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	15	9

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)

Maryland's plan to implement required developmental screenings across all licensed programs (along with the associated guidance on assessment selection and training on administration) is strong. Plans to refine kindergarten entry assessments are strong, and efforts to refine formative assessment processes aligned with the early learning standards will help coordinate the use of the early learning standards across program types. It is less clear how measurements of environmental quality and teacher-child interactions (both components of Comprehensive Assessment Systems) will be used in ways that promote early childhood educators' understandings of the purpose of these measures and be able to use outcomes to facilitate program and instruction improvement (see below). Some elements of the state's partially implemented plan are strong; however, differential levels of quality across sub-criteria weaken the state's response. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. *** (a) The state's plan to work with programs to provide guidance on the selection of appropriate assessment instruments is especially strong in the area of developmental screenings to support early identification of children who may need intervention. The state has selected four appropriate instruments to make available (with training) to programs to support the new requirement that all licensed programs screen incoming children, beginning in 2013. The state plans to guide other assessment selection by revising the kindergarten readiness assessment and revisiting the early learning standards to replace benchmarks with "developmental learning progressions" and formative assessments linked to the B-3 learning standards. These will be validated by a panel of state and national experts. Through EXCELS, the Environmental Rating Scales (ERSs) are used to measure environmental quality and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) will be used in some programs as a measure of teacher-child interactions. However, in both of these cases, the assessments are not used by the programs themselves (excepting the ERS self-evaluation) and the programs do not participate in their selection or administration.*** (b) The state's plan to utilize an existing pool of trainers to enhance educators' knowledge of the new assessment strategies is strong. And, Maryland will provide face-to-face and online options to develop educators understanding about the newly developed "learning progressions" and formative assessments (see (a) above). However, the state's plan to enhance providers' understanding of the ERS and CLASS measurements is limited because the focus is primarily on developing the pool of qualified raters to conduct the assessments. This is not entirely inappropriate, but also does not address this sub-criterion, which is aimed to help providers themselves better understand the assessment purposes and uses. *** (c) The requirement of all licensed programs to use developmental screenings is a strong decision to support the state's goals of meeting the needs of all children, particularly children with higher needs. The state's response mentions developing a "seamless" system for assessment coordination, but this is not well developed. Although the state describes articulation across early learning programs and with the public school system, the plan does not provide a method for avoiding or eliminating duplicate assessments, or sharing assessment findings between services for young children. *** (d) In addition to providing training on administration of the newly required developmental screenings, Maryland plans to expand professional development on assessment administration and the use of associated data to guide instruction in EXCELS programs. The state's plan includes the expansion of trainings using enhanced technology for formative assessments (to be developed), and the Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR). These are both important contributions to supporting providers' use of assessment and the associated information, but it is not clear how many educators these efforts will reach.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	15	7

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

The state has developed a progression of increasing standards to ensure children's health and safety, and has demonstrated strong early childhood mental health infrastructure. The state has plans to require screenings in all licensed child care, a clear strength. However, the state does not detail ambitious, achievable goals for increasing the numbers of educators to be trained and supported in meeting health standards, nor increases in the numbers of children with high needs who are being referred following screening and followed-up, or numbers of children participating in ongoing health care such as well-child visits. The state has a partially implemented plan; however, the quality of the state's response varies by sub-criteria (see below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state has developed a progression of standards to ensure children's health and safety, presented in Chart C-4. Increasing levels within EXCELS represent increasing quality in the area of children's health. The state's plan to require screenings in all licensed child care (by 2013) is a strong baseline on which to build. *** (b) The state's response for this sub-criterion focuses exclusively on childhood mental health and social-emotional development. It details Maryland's progress to date with implementation of the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning model (training many trainers and coaches across the state) and explains the University of Maryland's establishment of a post-Master's certificate in early childhood mental health. Through the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation project, the state has been able to collaborate with families and schools around increased mental health for young children through 12 project sites. Although the state details plans to integrate data collection and analysis through online systems, the basic requirement of this sub-criterion is not met because the state does not explain its goals for increasing number and percentage of early educators who are trained/supported in the area of meeting the health standards (which, as described in (a) above, cover more than mental health). *** (c) The state outlines a strong foundation for existing efforts to promote healthy eating habits, nutrition, and physical activity through materials created for families, trainings for staff through EXCELS via the resource and referral network, and a USDA grant to improve nutrition and physical activity in Maryland's EXCELS programs. Early Childhood credentialing in Maryland also requires coursework/training in health, nutrition, and physical activity. The state does not state a plan to implement new activities under this sub-criterion using grant funds. *** (d) The 2013 requirement to screen all children entering licensed childcare is certain to increase the number of children screened in the state. However, Performance Measure (C)(3)(d) details only the numbers of screenings conducted at Judy Centers, which it does not plan to increase. This does not meet the requirement for this sub-criterion to set ambitious and achievable goals to increase the number of children with high needs who are screened (although we know that these numbers will increase, specific goals are not laid out). Further, it is very likely that there will be an increase in numbers of children identified as needing intervention (due to mandatory screening); however, the state does not address how it plans to meet this new need across the state. The state does not address an increase in referral or follow up in this Performance Measures Table, nor does it address any information related to numbers of children participating in ongoing health care or well-child care. Two strengths in this area are the implementation of training on developmental screening tools, and the incorporation of screening data into the early childhood data warehouse.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	15	7

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 outlines a progression of standards for programs to engage families, and plans to expand and coordinate existing programming for family involvement. However, the progression within the standards is not strong, and the state does not clearly explain a plan to increase the number and percentage of educators who are trained and supported in engaging families in the education and development of young children with high needs. This partially implemented plan is varied in quality according to the sub-criteria (see below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state has developed a progression of standards to promote family engagement, presented in Chart C-6. Increasing levels within EXCELS represent increasing quality in the area of family involvement. The state's decision to measure family engagement by number of "ways" a program engages families is not as clear and valuable as actually outlining and designating which "ways" are most effective and best promote promotion of parents as partners in education. *** (b) The state proposes to establish initiatives to engage families, build infrastructure, and provide guidance to ensure that engagement methods are culturally appropriate, but the state's response does not address increasing the number and percentage of early childhood educators trained to implement family engagement strategies (the requirement for this sub-criterion).*** (c) Maryland's plan to coordinate and enhance existing family engagement infrastructure is strong. The state's plan involves expanding existing programs (such as Reach Out and Read and the "learning party" model), building leadership within the library system, and reaching out to families who are not already part of the early childhood system in Maryland (often children with high-needs).

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)

Maryland has fully implemented each sub-criterion for this section (see below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range.*** (a) Maryland has already developed a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge Competency Framework (WKCF) to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. The WKCF defines standards of learning outcomes for credentialing programs and training, which make up the "Core of Knowledge" in six key areas (child development, curriculum, health/safety/nutrition, special needs, professionalism, and community). *** (b) Maryland's "Core of Knowledge"/WKCF is already aligned with the credentialing system for the state (defining progressive levels of professional development along a career ladder). *** (c) The state currently engages postsecondary institutions and professional development providers in

alignment of degrees and training with the Core of Knowledge/WKCF. Articulation agreements are in place to support educators moving from two year institutions to four year institutions with four recognized transfer courses (child development, curriculum planning, special education, administration of childcare programs). Maryland also established an Associates of Arts in Teaching for early childhood education to address the need for more degreed teachers while maintaining high standards for teacher preparation.

	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 state has several strategies in place to support access to credentialing, degree programs, and training, as well as incentivizing professional development activities for continuous quality improvement. The state's reporting system for data related to early childhood educators is only partially implemented (see (c) below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) Maryland's Workforce Knowledge Competency Framework is comprehensively incorporated into credentialing programs and approved training across the state. To provide and expand access to effective professional development, the state proposes two methods: establishing an alternative state teacher certification pathway for professionals working full-time, and building leadership in early childhood programs through participation in the Leadership in Early Learning Academies. An alternative pathway to state certification will make achieving this level of degree much more accessible for providers already working in the field. Leadership in Early Learning Academies are designed to build leaders within schools with professional development in rigorous, developmentally appropriate instruction. Because these two programs target professionals who have already made significant progress in their professional development (as evidenced by seeking state certification or being part of the leadership structure), they do not constitute a comprehensive picture of a commitment to expansion of access to professional development opportunities for all educators (especially for educators of children with high needs). However, when taken in context with the supports and incentives described in (b) below, they are good supplements to increasing access to high quality professional development for early childhood educators.*** (b) The state has a series of policies and incentives designed to support educators on a path to professional development, track and record achievement, and promote retention in the early childhood field. A combination of scholarships and vouchers (Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund and the Training Voucher for Continuing Education), cooperation agreements with school systems, and financial assistance for programs seeking accreditation combine to support individuals and programs in continuous improvement. See (B)(2)(b) above for information regarding bonus and retention strategies for employees within the EXCELS program. *** (c) Currently, Maryland reports aggregate data related to the credentialing system and is planning to construct a framework within the State Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse to make aggregate data publicly available on staff development, advancement, and retention.

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	19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state's kindergarten assessment is already fully implemented, but is targeted for revision to modify the format of the assessment. Existing content structures (early learning standards), training programs, data management, and funding streams will be used to support the new assessment as well. Because the state has a fully implemented assessment (with plans to revise its format), this section is scored in the high range. *** (a) Maryland has already fully implemented a statewide kindergarten entry assessment (modified Work Sampling System) that is aligned with the early learning standards. Through the RTT-ELC opportunity, the state plans to revise the assessment to move away from the portfolio-type assessment and utilize computer-based performance tasks and a running record approach instead. The revised assessment will remain grounded in the early learning standards for what children know and can do (covering all essential domains of school readiness).*** (b) The current kindergarten entry assessment is reliable and valid for populations including ELLs and children with disabilities, having been developed by practitioners, curriculum specialists, and reviewed by expert consultants. Teachers receive intensive professional development to ensure that the assessment is implemented with consistency. Moving forward, the new assessment will undergo a similar process of development: blueprinting, prototype piloting, reliability and validity studies. The expert panel will consist of both early childhood assessment experts and psychometricians.*** (c) The state is currently assessing all children upon kindergarten entry, and will continue assessing children using this method with the new tool when it is administered statewide in SY2014-15.*** (d) The state is currently reporting outcomes to the Statewide Longitudinal System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse. This procedure will continue with the revised kindergarten readiness assessment, and link with information about children's programmatic experiences prior to kindergarten so that funds can be targeted towards areas where program improvement is greatly needed. Online resources will be available to support teachers' use of data for instructional purposes.*** (e) Maryland has significant funding streams dedicated to kindergarten readiness assessment and plans to use RTT-ELC funding to revise the system already in place. Once revised, the existing funding streams will support the implementation of the new assessment. Further, the state plans to partner with Ohio's board of education to collaboratively share costs across the development of this new tool.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	17

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)

Although not fully implemented, Maryland has a strong plan to enhance early learning data systems to increase functionality, accuracy, completeness, and data sharing. The state's plan outlines a comprehensive system that will meet the needs of all users (families, educators, trainers, higher education, public officials, and participating state agencies) and coordinate services across program types (special education, state preschool, Head Start, health organizations, TQRIS, kindergarten assessment, licensed centers, higher education, and subsidy systems). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range.*** (a) The state's plans for enhancements to the Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse meet each of the requirements for essential data elements as defined by the federal application (including unique identifiers for children, educators, and program sites; demographic information for children, families, and educators; program structure and quality information; and child attendance and participation data).*** (b) The planned implementation of the system will allow for interoperable systems through links between data systems and standard data structures, formats, and definitions. Unique identifiers are assigned for children and families attending public programs or participating in the subsidy programs, and educator and program identifiers are assigned for all publicly funded or licensed programs, and remain permanently in the systems, following individuals throughout their careers.*** (c) Data exchange agreements are already in place to facilitate cooperation with institutes of higher education, particularly critical to maintaining professional development and credentialing information for early childhood educators. Also, see (b) above.*** (d) Timeliness and accuracy will be enhanced through improvements planned by the state for the CCATS system's public portal. This system is being designed with a user-friendly interface to maintain complete records and information for parents (to access the subsidy system, including attendance records), trainers (to maintain professional development records), and programs (to manage licensing, apply for grants and incentives, and track expenditures on disbursements). The state's comprehensive, specific, and thorough plan is to implement a full service site to support all users in an efficient, effective manner.*** (e) The state plans to hire a specialist to manage oversight requirements and laws, a reasonable measure to ensure compliance with all regulations.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	218

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

Credit is given for Competitive Preference Priority 3 because the state has implemented a kindergarten entry assessment that meets all elements in Table (A)(1)-12. In addition, more than 70 percent of the points available for (E)(1) were awarded.

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

Overall, the state's plan is well coordinated and comprehensive, designed to target children with highest need through a series of community-based initiatives and local infrastructure-building efforts to coordinate and align services in areas of concentrated need. Maryland has a strong history of innovation and investment in early childhood, and has already undertaken some major accomplishments in the areas of kindergarten entry assessment, universal access to public preschool for low-income children, and articulation agreements to support the professional development of early childhood educators. The state plans to meaningfully redesign two major pillars of its early childhood systems: the TQRIS and the kindergarten readiness assessment, both of which will help promote better learning outcomes for young children and strengthen the information available to refine program and instructional quality. A detailed and comprehensive data system upgrade will support nearly every area of the state's plan by facilitating interagency data sharing and making information usable by multiple stakeholders.