



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NM-5025

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

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality</p> <p>Comments on (A)(1)</p> <p>The applicant provided strong evidence that the State has demonstrated a clear commitment to invest in Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs and continues to access and provides investments from government as well as private sources, including the W.G. Kellogg Foundation. It is noted that the number of children served in State-funded preschool and programs receiving CCDF funds decreased in 2011, overall, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs has increased from January 2007. The number of children in state funded pre-schools has gone from 2194 to 4435 and the funds invested from 6.7 million to well over 14 million dollars. As noted by the applicant, this is significant given the nation's economy and demonstrates a clear commitment to early learning. The applicant has made great progress on key areas in the development of systems that support children including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, and strategies for health promotion and family engagement practices. Comprehensive Assessment Systems are not currently in place for Home Visiting Programs and Early Intervention, but the state has plans to include these programs. The applicant also has professional development systems in place that represent all iterations of their TORIS. Currently the applicant reports several different data systems that obtain critical child information but these systems are not aligned. This is a deficit in their state and one that is recognized by the applicant, with plans to create one coordinated system that is called EPICS.</p>		
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

The State has an extensive history of providing Universal Pre-K and has been working on its early learning reform agenda for several years and has an impressive existing organizational infrastructure. A deficit recognized by the State is their need to ensure equitable access to an aligned and high quality system. The State has provided evidence that it currently has several of the pieces in place and has set ambitious goals for utilizing already existing guidelines, aligning systems and fully implementing TQRIS, which it has named FOCUS TQRIS as its third iteration of a TQRIS system. Evidence has not been provided to support the State's goal of every early childhood program in New Mexico having its own standardized continuous quality improvement plan and consultants to support their work on the specific goals within those plans. It is not clear how this will be funded or executed. Overall, the applicant is building upon current strengths and weakness including alignment and uneven implementation and has selected criteria to best achieve their goals of building upon existing work in the state.

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;
- (2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and
- (3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant will utilize three state agencies to implement its proposal; the Public Education Department, the Children, Youth, and Families Department, and the Department of Health, with the Public Education Department acting as the lead agency. This demonstrates collaboration and an infrastructure to be built upon. The lead agency is the Public Education Department which is a good way to align the educational systems within the State. The State's Early Childhood Advisory Council will also play a role but its roles and responsibilities as well as the scope of their work is not clearly delineated. Dispute resolution calls for agency-designated representatives to air their grievances and then jointly settle the dispute. Given the size and scope of this project, a more detailed method for making decisions and settling disputes is warranted. The state provided some evidence that each Participating State Agency is invested but terms and conditions and a clear description of efforts were not clearly provided. Given the size and statewide breadth of this project, the applicant did not have as many letters of support from a variety of key stakeholders-especially given their goal of consultants working with each early childhood program. For a project of this scope to be effective in reaching ambitious and achievable goals key stakeholders including family and community organizations across the state need to be invested and provide letters of support outlining their roles and responsibilities.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(4)

The State has detailed an adequate budget that supports the activities described in its plan and includes costs that are reasonable to the number of children to be served. The State's spending is judiciously allocated to the different programs described in their overall plan. The State's budget does not rely on funding direct services to children and families but on building up their infrastructure to support many of the activities that currently are in place. The State provided data describing the 15,000 early childhood educators working, but also indicated that its workforce is not well credentialed. More detail in the budget is needed on its efforts, to recruit, retain, and maintain its early childhood workforce. The State has invested both State and private funds into early childhood efforts in the past and their strengthening of its infrastructure will help ensure that these efforts continue after the grant period ends, but more explicit detail is needed as to what commitments will be maintained by private sources (e.g. Kellogg foundation).

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 applicant is about to begin its third iteration of a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System which has allowed it to learn from the past and strengthen its current system so that it is clear and has more differentiated quality levels. They have in place many of the building blocks to begin. Many of the components of tiered Program Standards are in place but have yet to be aligned or fully implemented, which is critical for a state this geographically and culturally diverse. The State has demonstrated that it has Early Childhood Educator qualifications that are linked to Early Learning and Development Standards but few in the state have Early Childhood degrees. Similarly there are effective data practices but they are not linked to a common system. The state has learned a valuable lesson that low-income parents often based their choice of provider on convenience and the number of low income children receiving subsidy in higher quality programs was low-in 2003 only 8% of children on subsidy where in programs with a quality rating of 4 or 5. The state has had some successful strategies to engage parents and has increased their number of low income children in higher quality programs. The State does have a current Comprehensive Assessment System and effective data practices and a good plan to link the different existing systems into one.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	14

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 done a commendable job of incorporating its first Level of its TQRIS into basic licensure and mandated that programs receiving subsidies would at least be required to obtain Level 2 standards. Similarly their "Look for the Stars" required all licensed programs to have their quality level in the form of stars displayed on their license regardless of whether they had children receiving subsidies. The applicant also demonstrated that it offered targeted consultation and resources to help more families in areas of high concentrations of Children with High Needs to afford high-quality care. Specifically, the applicant's Early Childhood Investment Zones further support these endeavors. These ECIZ's identify areas of particular high need and create community advisory teams that target services and resources to help each zone meet the unique needs of their area. Given the State's existing infrastructure, the State's goals are ambitious yet achievable for the numbers of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in TQRIS.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(3)

The State has demonstrated commitment to early childhood and has a good infrastructure to begin the third iteration of its TQRIS. The State has had decentralized staff that provided monitoring and verification of quality rating levels throughout the State. The State has effectively demonstrated that this data has been used to improve program quality and access for families. Now, the state is proposing a verification system that will be coordinated and monitored through a centralized infrastructure-which is needed and a gap in their infrastructure. This is a good plan for monitoring quality. The State requires program quality ratings to be prominently displayed on licenses and have had a campaign aimed at providing information to parents on the importance of quality and identifying it at different sites. This is a good method for providing information to parents who visit sites, but does not address all parents. Given their data that reports parents are still choosing convenience over quality, more targeted efforts are needed. The State has learned from their experience that parents of High Need Children were relying more on center convenience than quality and tailored their approaches to specifically raise the quality in those centers in addition to outreach to parents. More specific parent outreach activities are planned in addition to those that are already implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Improvement System; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

The extent to which the state can increase the access of Children with High Needs to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs is strong based upon their experiences, lessons learned, existing policies and new practices. The development of Early Childhood Investment Zones is strong and identifies and prioritizes communities where children are at greatest risk and supports high need and working families by providing resources and strategies identified by community advisory teams. This is an excellent strategy to overcome the reluctance of some parents to actively seek out high quality programs and meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families at a local level. These teams will utilize the Getting to Outcomes planning model, based on the states previously successful Project LAUNCH. Building on past success will give them the framework for future success. The state has had a tiered QRIS system and will expand and implement across other program areas during the course of this grant and has done a good job of targeting areas for improvement including family engagement and supports. The number and percentage of Children with High Needs enrolled in the top tiers of the TQRIS system are ambitious yet achievable and include all state-funded programs. More specificity is needed to address the unique needs of working parents-particularly when their own data show that parents are still choosing convenience. Overall, the State has a High Quality Plan in place to develop and fully implement an integrated and aligned system for improving the quality of programs participating in their TQRIS and the infrastructure in place.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	12

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 is proposing a High-Quality Plan which will utilize an outside contractor who will provide sampling plans, sample sizes, power calculations and other justifications of their studies. The comparisons between the old TQRIS and the new system are strong and provide a strong foundation for making revisions to models and programs. The contractor will examine the validity of key underlying concepts, examine the psychometric properties of the measures used to assess quality, assess the outputs of the rating process, and relate ratings to expected child outcomes. Overall, the evaluation will examine whether centers are better able to promote child outcomes and whether centers with a higher rating promote higher outcomes. The evaluation plan relies on some future decisions that the State makes about implementation of the FOCUS TQRIS. The State does a good job of using its logic model to specify comprehensive assessments that will be used with the FOCUS TQRIS.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	26

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 New Mexico Early Childhood Crosswalks and Alignment allow professionals to use Early Learning Guidelines that are aligned with other standards and benchmarks and are a continuum from birth to five. These crosswalks demonstrated standards that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate which is critical for this diverse state. They have also ensured that their standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards and are evidenced in their professional development activities. This is an excellent framework for establishing consistency across the programs. The State uses an assessment, documentation and curriculum planning process to inform parents and plan strategies to meet the needs of children. Comprehensive Assessment Systems currently exist for certain programs and the State does include a High Quality plan to expand these to include Home Visiting and Early Intervention Programs. Professional development activities include trainings and consultations but more explicit detail is needed on their content.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	27

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 is planning on the TQRIS FOCUS to unify child care, Pre-K, Head Start, and home visiting, Early Intervention. They are proposing a common data system that will unify all of the separate systems. The unique identifier is a good method for each child to help ascertain whether assessments have been conducted and is an excellent tracking and monitoring tool. Consultants will be used to train Early Childhood Educators and provide information on what additional technical assistance is necessary for a particular center. Given the geographical isolation of the community, and the various populations of special needs within the number of Children with High Needs, more information is needed on the consultants to ascertain where they will be recruited from and who will train them. Given the low numbers of early childhood educators with advanced degrees in the state, information on these consultants is critical.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(1)

The State has incorporated common core competencies to develop a universal, statewide curriculum for early childhood teacher preparation resulting in all Associate and Bachelor degree programs following agreed upon syllabi templates that include common core competencies. This is an excellent method for aligning statewide professional development and allowing educators to transfer between professional development providers. Based on the needs of the State, their licensure will move from birth to 3rd grade in 2014 into birth through age 4 and age 3 through grade 3 which will allow them to provide more targeted resources, and technical assistance. There is a career lattice with several levels identified which can assist educators in moving forward. Postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers have been engaged through statewide early care and education stakeholder meetings. However, the applicant has not provided a plan to show engagement of teachers or plans to explain the value of moving up the lattice and how that translates into compensation.

	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)

In 2014, the State will move its licensure for early childhood from one birth-3rd grade license into 2; birth through age 4 and age 3 through third grade. As a result of this shift, the State will provide and expand professional development opportunities that are aligned to their Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework such as an Infant Mental Health Endorsement and Mind in the Making Training. The State does provide incentives that promote professional development and career advancement such as T.E.A.C.H. scholarships which led to partnerships with New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children which then led to other scholarships and compensation but details were not provided in the application. Though the number of TEACH scholarships has been increasing, there is no aggregate, centralized data on early childhood educators. Given the low number reported on all baseline credential data, it is unclear why the State is choosing to focus resources on the increase in the number of Master's level faculty. More information is needed on recruitment and retention efforts of early childhood educators' professional development opportunities.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant. (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p> <p>Comments on (E)(1)</p> <p>The State plans on building on its experience with full and extended day Kindergarten assessment which had used the DIBELS and had existing legislation and funding. It plans on utilizing existing state funds for Kindergarten Assessment. The State plans to utilize an RFP to contract with an outside entity to validate the current Pre-K Observational Assessment tool for use in Kindergarten. This validation will ascertain whether the system covers all Essential Domains but the application has not provided information on the tool that will be used. The State reports it will utilize the current observe/document/assess/planning cycle but more detail is needed. Once the assessment has been validated the data will be included in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. More information is needed on the validation process.</p>		

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	19
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p>		

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(2)

The State is proposing a five phase process for enhancing their current early learning data system and reports it is in phase one of the process. They currently operate numerous data systems (Children Youth and Family Department, UNM, DOH) which effectively collect data but it is not coordinated. A new consolidated effort will be CYFD's Enterprise Web-Based Provider Information Constituent Services (EPICS). CYFD has begun implementing EPICS and the Department will continue to consolidate and align all CYFD services and will link to the State's Early Learning Programs not housed in CYFD. The EPICS system will unify and align the separate systems to collect data in a uniform way, using unique identifiers, as well as standard data structures, data formats and Common Education Data Standards. Unique identifiers and interoperability provides one system where information is accessible and Early Childhood Educators can use to answer key program and quality questions. This is an excellent method for generating information that is accessible and can be used by all Early Childhood Educators for decision making.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	241

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	9

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The State has a high-quality implementation plan to cover all programs that are not otherwise regulated. Their first step is to recruit staff who can authentically create relationships with informal providers, then have these highly skilled and culturally competent recruitment staff go to the providers with materials, supports, and incentives that are tailored to what the providers want and find useful at the beginning to establish the relationship. This is a good method for a state that is geographically and culturally diverse. This forms the basis of their plan for recruiting and engaging informal day care providers in a certificate program aligned with the licensing standards in the FOCUS TORIS during year one of the grant, and begin implementing the plan during the second year. The State has carefully considered the needs of its population and has created a good plan to support its providers in a way that will increase the number of children who are participating in programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State.

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 earned a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for (E)(1)

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The State has a clear and credible path towards improving the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by building upon an infrastructure that has evolved based on strengths, weaknesses and data received on current practices. The State has demonstrated a clear commitment to invest in Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs and continues to access and provide investments from government as well as private sources. The State has an excellent The State is culturally and geographically diverse and improving outcomes for Children with High Needs requires targeted efforts across the state that are included in its High-Quality Plan. The FOCUS TQRIS, T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, Early Childhood Investment Zones and integrated data system are all in various stages of implementation but the State presented evidence that all pieces will be in place by 2015. The New Mexico Early Childhood Crosswalks and Alignment allow professionals to use Early Learning Guidelines that are aligned with other standards and benchmarks and are a continuum from birth to 5. These crosswalks demonstrated standards that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate which is critical for this diverse state. The various pieces of the State's High-Quality plan come together to best prepare its Children with High Needs for success in Kindergarten and elementary school.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # NM-5025

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 7:17 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: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant included many of the building blocks upon which to establish a more effective system within the grant period. However, the strengths of these building blocks and how well they easily lend themselves to effective systems is variable. This response was rated in the medium quality range. a. NM has a large population of children who meet their definition of Children with High Needs. Relatedly, the state has a large population of children who do not meet benchmarks of successful performance in elementary school. As noted in the tables, the state clearly spends a large amount of money to fund programs for children with High Needs. However, there appears to be unexplained variability in the allocation of these funds. For example, (Table A1-4) supplemental state funding for Early Head Start and Head Start decreased substantially from 2007-2010, although the percentage of children enrolled does not. Similarly, "other state" contributions decreased as well. Although some funds decreased, the number of children in these programs did not decrease. b. The number of Children with High Needs who are served by relevant programs has increased since 2007. c. NM has been working on coming up with a cohesive, integrated, aligned system of legislation and policies since at least 1989, if not earlier. The state seems to have reinvented and reshuffled quite a few times how it handles this aspect of the educational system. More recently, (in 2010, 2011), their goal has been to streamline the various systems into fewer, more effective ones. d. NM is in its third generation of a tiered quality rating and improvement system for rating the quality of child care facilities. After what seemed like a rocky start, AIM High (forerunner of current program) and now FOCUS are in place, although latter is not fully implemented. The newly implemented or to be implemented FOCUS builds upon what was a successful but out of date AIM High system, as described by the state. That is, the old system succeeded in getting child care facilities to at least the lowest tier rating. The proposed system focuses on children's learning and ways that teachers could improve their skills as observers of such and planners of curricula. NM also has a third generation of professional development practices in place. The various Early Learning Development Programs have in place practices for promoting health promotion practices and family engagement. However, the quality of the practices is unknown and what aspects of health promotion are in place varies across programs. Some of the programs in the state use some but not all elements of the Comprehensive Assessment Systems. Another strength of the proposal is that it appears that most of the

postsecondary programs offer programs for training that are aligned with the state's current workforce knowledge and competency framework. Two additional weaknesses are: a unified data system is not yet in place across all agencies and there is no consistent, fully implemented program of Kindergarten Entry Assessments.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	10

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

This response lacked adequate specification of objectives and how such objectives realistically would be achieved. The response was of medium/low quality. a. NM lists 4 objectives: 1) Utilize their Early Learning Guidelines as foundation for aligning systems and improve program quality; 2) Fully implement FOCUS, its new tiered quality rating system; 3) Establish Children's Investment Zones, and 4) Build a unified data systems. The establishment of Children's Investment Zones is an innovative way of aggregating risk factors and child/community strengths. If the objectives can be operationalized and carried out, it could lead to a decrease in the achievement gap. However, what was insufficiently described in the proposal was how the state will turn the objectives into achievable goals. That is, how do these objectives tie in to children's outcomes, what will be achieved and by when? For example, consider Objective 1: what is the achievable goal that stems from this objective? b. NM says the heart of their plan is the FOCUS aspect. This will enable providers to better focus on children's learning or improve their practices which, in turn, should improve outcomes. Perhaps, but much professional development will be needed as well as alignment of goals and experiences as one goes from preschool to kindergarten. NM uses a consultation system for much of its professional development. There was insufficient specification of how such consultants will be used, and what their backgrounds will be. There also needs to be much closer alignment with all stakeholders to overcome what is a very needy population who historically do not display kindergarten readiness skills and who differ in ideas as to how to prepare for kindergarten. Currently the state operates what the proposal describes as a silo system. It is the state's goal to combine this into a system of systems but that will take a lot of work. c. There was insufficient information about the rationale for specific choices and how such choices would be implemented. There also needed to be further specification/discussion of the demographics of the rural and frontier children. These children comprise a substantial proportion of the population.

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
 - (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
 - (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

A3. The applicant has partially implemented a system that appears to be of medium quality. a. The governance system and organizational structure clearly delineates a system to facilitate their successfully working together, with two, related exceptions. Three departments have been listed: Public Education; Children, Youth and Families; and Health. Public Education will be the lead agency. No explicit rationale was given as to why Public Education was selected to serve as lead agency. In fact, many of the relevant agencies (Early Childhood Services, Early Learning Advisory Committee) report to the Children, Youth and Families Department and not to the Public Education Department. Moreover, large portions of the implementation of the project will be conducted by the Children, Youth and Families department. In addition, the RTT-ELC subcommittee reports to the Early Learning Advisory Committee. b. The responsibilities and scope listed for the various agencies and departments appear appropriate to facilitate their successfully working together towards their goal of improving early learning and development programs. NM proposes writing an RFP to conduct a process evaluation to evaluate the implementation of the project components. The applicant notes that the evaluation will be used to track implementation of the project and provide guidelines for changes in structure and/or design. It would have been useful to provide more details of what will be required, how it will be implemented and the timeline for conducting the evaluation. c. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that specifies who will be involved in implementing the program and what their roles will be. Letters from many stakeholders (for the most part the higher level officials not from the actual centers or community organizations) are highly supportive. There are also letters of support from the business community. On the other hand, there were not letters from family and community organizations and actual grass roots organizations. It is these groups who will be key to effectively implementing the program. A military readiness organization provided several letters of support but it was unclear what role it plays in this program.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	3

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant did not sufficiently specify how funds will be spent or how programs developed during the grant will be sustainable once the grant funding ends. The response was rated as a low quality response. a. The proposal describes the amount of funds that are allocated from the grant and other sources to the key 3 organizations responsible for managing the project. However, the proposal did not describe how each agency would apportion its share of the funds. b. Which agencies will be responsible for which portion of the grant is noted, but the proposal does not indicate how funds will be spent for the specified components within an agency. c. NM did not address sustainability. Even though some of the funds from the grant will be used for start-up and will not be needed after the grant ends, no mention was made of financing remaining components.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(1)

NM has an existing tiered rating system which it has dramatically revised but not yet fully implemented a. The state has a tiered system that is being rolled out. It replaces the one that was used. The new one addresses the program standards. b. There is insufficient differentiation among star levels for certain of the standards. For example, staff at all star levels require just a high school diploma. There is not sufficient focus on health promotion. Nothing seems to be in place for assisting in developing appropriate eating and exercise habits. Health promotion consists of the child having a home medical/dental home (star 3) to a vision/hearing screening (star 4) and a developmental screening (star 5). The family engagement strategies need to be expanded to address better the needs of the community. For example, at star level 3, the only requirement is to hold a parent/teacher conference in the home language. Perhaps the weakest aspect is how the children are being assessed. The applicant notes it will use formative, ongoing observation but this needs much further description and justification. There currently are plans in place for training the teachers on the assessment techniques. However, the proposal did not sufficiently address how people would be trained to administer the assessments. NM's plan calls for only 12 hours of training. Learning to correctly and reliably administer an assessment can take far more than 12 hours, especially if the trainees do not have that much formal education. (e.g., only high school diplomas). c. The new tiered rating system is linked to the state's licensing system .

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(2)

The applicant has used several different systems over the years. It recently again revised its system but this has not been fully implemented across all sites. a. The state provides too vague a description for how it will bring all the required programs into the new tiered program. On the positive side, the proposal calls for the creation of a certificate program for nonlicensed providers and it notes a timeline for roll out of requirements. However, the 6 month time-frame is far too little time to design and implement an effective program. In addition, the state notes it will use consultants to assist the programs with the transition process but did not describe who the consultants would be or how many there would be. Another strength of the proposal is the awareness of the need for community buy-in. This is something that NM has done successfully in the past, although it appears that this often took time. The changes to the system that the applicant proposes making are substantive and will require significant revising of how providers and families think about child care. The state indicates that it will hire consultants whose demographics backgrounds are consistent with that of members of their target community and will work to develop a plan for recruitment. Such a plan could include offering incentives, the nature of which was not specified. There also were no specific details given about what the consultants would do to successfully recruit providers, many of whom the state noted were skeptical of government monitoring and regulation. Given the nature of the changes and the need to convince some providers to enroll in the programs, there may be insufficient time during the grant period to accomplish these plans. b. The applicant did not address what will be done to help more families with high needs children be able to afford child care. c. The target goal for participation varies by program. However, no rationale is given for why some targets are 100% participation (starting from 0) and some are 39% (starting at 29%). More explanation of the specifics of what will be done to increase participation would have been useful.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(3)

Although NM has a history of monitoring some of its programs, the system is being greatly revised and is not yet fully implemented. a. NM is changing the nature of the monitoring program--what it is and who will be monitored. The roll-out of the new system calls for retraining, reconceptualizing and planning. Too much of the planning will take place only once the grant is funded. That limits the success of fully and successfully implementing the program during the grant timeline. In addition, there was not sufficient information provided about the number of the consultants and what their responsibilities will be. Consultants will play an important role in monitoring. The applicant will use benchmark attainment (although these have yet to be determined) environmental quality ratings, and observations that are linked to the TQRIS tool. However, the validity of that tool is something that will be established during the project. The applicant has set an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability (at least 85%) but has not described the training that will take place to procure reliability. b. The proposal calls for information about quality ratings/licensing history to be made available in centers and on the state's website. Not all parents, particularly low income ones who are just beginning to look for centers, will have access to websites. The proposal does not discuss the reading level of material to be placed on websites (an issue for low literacy parents) nor whether the information will be available in languages other than English (an issue for parents in New Mexico where many families are non-English speaking immigrants).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

The proposal describes a high need population. Many portions of the state do not have acceptable child care facilities or, as noted by the applicant, the skills/knowledge to apply for available funds. In other words, in some counties children with high needs do not have access to high quality early learning and development programs. What the state proposes has not been fully implemented. need. a. The proposal describes an approach that will increase outreach to community members to empower them to mobilize parents and other stakeholders. They have created Early Childhood Investment Zones, a means of identifying at-risk communities, and hence, children. The Early Childhood Investment Zones are identified based on a combination of risk and protective factors. Note, however, that the process of identifying these zones throughout the states has not been fully implemented. The proposal calls for two types of outreach: 1) create high quality facilities in these zones, something that is currently lacking; and, 2) convince families to send their children to such facilities. The state provides financial incentives (higher reimbursement rates) for programs to improve their quality ratings. b. The state has increased its reimbursement rates which serves to decrease the cost of child care for families in need. However, there are other needs, in addition to financial, that can limit access. The proposal notes such needs as lack of facilities, language issues, poor health, belief systems that interfere with using professional child care, and so on. The applicant is using a community-based approach to identify specific needs within a community. Such an approach is based on the notion that needs may differ across communities. The proposal emphasizes using local planning processes (not described in any detail) to determine what the needs are and then create a supportive infrastructure. Such an approach has been successfully used by others. However, given the vagueness of the description of the processes, the timeline for determining needs that interfere with access to high quality care can go beyond the timeline of the grant. c. The applicant present figures showing increases in the number of ELD programs in the top tiers of TQRIS and enrollment in the various child care programs. No information is presented, however, to justify the size of the increases.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (B)(5)

The proposal discusses conducting a validation and evaluation study. The evaluation study will include: examination of the underlying concepts; the psychometric properties of the measures used to assess quality, and relate ratings of quality to expected child outcomes. As noted in the application, key measures have not yet been fully identified. The evaluation will address two questions: 1) whether centers that participate in FOCUS TQRIS promote better child outcomes than those that participate in QRIS; and, 2) whether centers with a higher FOCUS score better promote child outcomes than centers with a lower FOCUS score. Although the proposal addresses the need for an evaluation, most of the aspects of the evaluation seem to still be in the planning stages. The measures, including those for accessing child outcomes have not been identified.

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.	30	26

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 applicant provided a high quality plan describing a program that has been substantially implemented. a. The standards have been in place for a few years and are subject to ongoing revision. Standards are aligned across programs from infants and toddlers through prek and K-12 content standards. The standards are developmentally appropriate based on reviews by nationally recognized experts in the field including officials at WestEd and Zero through Three. There was insufficient information about cultural and linguistic appropriateness. In contrast, a focus group that included Native Americans was conducted suggesting that the program was vetted for appropriateness with this population. However, no mention is made of focus group or piloting testing with ESL speakers or Hispanic groups, a majority of NM's population. b. The standards are aligned with the Kindergarten-3 benchmarks as well as birth through k. c. The standards appear to be consistent with program standards. It serves as the cornerstone of FOCUS TQRIS. d. The state has provided and continues to provide training to facilitate teachers' understanding and commitment to the new system. Training is geared to new and returning staff. Such training has been provided in PreK programs located throughout the state. The applicant notes that over 700 people have attended the training programs during the past two years.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	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)

Applicant has in place what seems like a substantially implemented system. The quality of the response was of medium quality. a. NM appears to be using mainly what they call observation/documentation systems for assessing children's outcomes. Some of this has been in place for years. Some will presumably need modification as the FOCUS TQRS is rolled out. It would have been helpful if the process that the teachers use were more fully explicated. One strength of the system is that it appears to be horizontally aligned across programs, or at least partially so, with further alignment to come. Classroom quality and interactions will be assessed with the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). However, these will be conducted as self-assessments, according to the proposal. How that can be the case was not clear. For example, the CLASS has not been normed to be used as self-assessment, b.c.d. Although the proposal calls for these elements to take place and when they will take place, more information about how they will occur was needed. For example, it was unclear whether staff members will be given paid leave from work to do their 12 hours of training to learn the assessments.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant presented a high quality response that described a substantially implemented program. The initial development of this system began about 20 years ago and has been modified and revised several times since then. a. The state appears to have a common workforce knowledge and competency framework of competencies for its providers. The framework includes: child growth, development and learning, health, safety and nutrition, family and community collaboration, developmentally appropriate content, learning environment and curriculum implementation, assessment of children and evaluation of programs, professionalism. The framework was established through collaboration of policy makers and personnel at 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions. Vertical alignment of acquisition of courses/credits has been mandated by the state legislature. The proposal reportedly reflects standards consistent with national certification groups (NAEYC, Head Start). b. There is a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with this framework. The state uses what they call a career lattice that promotes articulation across different credentials. All personnel take a common foundation of courses and then specialize. c. Postsecondary institutions are aligned in the skills taught to potential providers. This is a significant advantage for students wanting to take courses across institutions.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

The applicant describes a partially implemented plan for how it will address this section. What they describe was of medium level range. a. NM will divide what is now a birth-Grade 3 license, in two (birth -age 4, age 3-Grade 3). This appears appropriate; it allows for better more targeted preparation of caregivers/teachers. The state also has added content areas and recently (within past few years) expanded the range of credentials/certification to reflect needs of clientele. The training appears aligned with the Workforce and Competency framework. b. The state currently offers scholarships to support people looking to earn higher degrees and receive more training. These opportunities will be expanded with the grant. However, how much money would be available to these students was not clear. It also was not clear whether the grants would support students or just offset a percentage of their costs. It also was not clear how well publicized financial options were for potential students. c. Relevant information is already reported on a website but it is not readily accessible to all interested parties. Grant funds will be used to increase accessibility of the site. d. Four year postsecondary institutions offer programs/credentials aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Most of the institutions (not all) that offer associate degrees are aligned. With the grant, effort will be made for universal alignment. The 5% yearly increase in enrollment in programs for early childhood educators appears to be a realistic goal. The state also has a goal

(not set number) for increase in professionals earning a master's. However, it was not sufficiently discussed in this proposal (e.g., how many people will avail themselves of this, what would be the impact). Also, given the high needs of the early childcare community, further justification for this expenditure was needed.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	8
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>NM's plan was rated as partially implemented. Whether the plan will be effective hinges upon the validity of the PreK Observational system which was never sufficiently described. A significant weakness of this response was that so much was speculative. NM is really at the very beginning of putting together a valid, reliable kindergarten assessment. a. NM plans on hiring a contractor to determine if their PreK Observational System is valid for use as a Kindergarten entry assessment. That is, as part of his/her task the contractor will need to determine whether the PreK Observational is sufficiently aligned with the Domains of K School Readiness. NM has turned from using a standardized means of assessment, the DIBELS, to the PreK Observational system. The applicant believes that the utility of the DIBELS was outweighed by its limited scope. The applicant raises an important issue. However, because the PreK Observational System was not sufficiently well-described in the proposal, it is not possible to determine whether it is an appropriate instrument. A strength of the PreK Observational system, if it proves to be valid and reliable for its intended purpose here, is that it is what is called an authentic assessment. Teachers can use the results of such assessments to tailor their instruction to the child's level and skill sets. b. NM says it will meet these criteria. However, they do not provide supporting documentation. c. NM says it will be fully phased in by the 2015. The timeline appears overly optimistic given where the state currently is in the process. According to the proposal, NM plans on putting out an RFP for an evaluator and completing the evaluation within 1 year. That seems too short a time frame. It does not allow for revision. d. It will be reported to such, according to NM. Again, supporting documentation was insufficient so the response is difficult to evaluate. e. It was not clear how much nongrant resources were being used.</p>

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State</p>		

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)

Response was scored within the partially implemented, high quality response. NM currently has in place a legacy system of silo warehousing of data. They have already begun to transform that system to one that allows for easier communication across all relevant agencies, is more accessible to all stakeholders, and includes a broader range of needed data. The new system will also allow uniform data collection and will meet data oversight systems. The plan for updating and installing this system appears realistic.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	156

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The applicant has partially implemented a means of increasing enrollment. However, they have not sufficiently described a means of overcoming some major challenges. a. During year 2 of the program, NM intends to develop and implement a system to cover the nonregulated or exempt programs. The proposal indicates excellent awareness of the issues to be overcome in this attempt (e.g., caregivers who may be undocumented immigrants) and the need to behave in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner. As noted by the applicant, this is a challenge. The applicant needed to provide much more information (with validity information or references to places that had met such challenges) about what exactly will be done to bring these unregulated providers on board. b. NM already has in place a TQRS that all regulated systems participate in. However, that system has been revised. The newer system is just being rolled out.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

a. The applicant does not have a Kindergarten entry assessment system in place. b. The score earned was below 70% of the maximum available points.

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

NM's proposal meets the absolute priority for promoting school readiness for children with high needs. The state has a "minority majority" population, many of whom are English language learners, Hispanic and/or from cultural backgrounds not in keeping with the more traditional European American ones found in other parts of the country. Consequently, NM has a high percentage of children who are classified as High Needs. The needs of the population are further reflected in academic attainment benchmarks in elementary school. The proposal discusses how it will improve quality of Early Learning Development Programs through integrating and aligning resources. It presents a TQR which has been revised; there are plans for its implementation. The applicant is well aware of the challenges of promoting early learning and development outcomes for High Need children and preparing a workforce, many of whom are not well-educated and suspicious of government regulation. The state is working on an authentic means of assessing children's kindergarten readiness skills, one that is also a valid and reliable means of measuring children's outcomes and will serve as guidelines that teachers can incorporate into teaching tools. The state also has proposed a plan that it believes will best prepare children for kindergarten success.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # NM-5025

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 11:36 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	17
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant has a long history of commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs. Most notable are: (1) Past and existing early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices established over the past 20 years. This includes legislation in 1989 that established the Office of Child Development and a governor-appointed Child Development Board; funding for the Office of Child Development in 1990 and establishment of legal oversight by the Child Development Board; legislation in 1992 that established the Children, Youth and Families Department that merged seven state service divisions into one cabinet level agency, which was the first in the US to do so; a 2005 executive order that established the New Mexico Children's Cabinet; the New Mexico Early Childhood Care and Education Act in 2011 that provided a description of the essential components of a high quality early childhood system, established the Early Learning Advisory Council, and established a Fund to support the establishment of a comprehensive aligned early childhood system of systems; and several task forces and study committees to address and study the needs of the State as they related to early learning and development. There also is evidence that the three participating state agencies identified in this proposal (Public Education Department, Children, Youth, and Families Department, and Department of Health) have collaborated in the past to establish an Early Learning Plan in mid-2000s. (2) Three generations of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) dating back to 1997. Since 1997, the TQRIS system has progressively included all licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes and built quality standards into licensing requirements. The most recent TQRIS (FOCUS) will be further enhanced to consolidate existing standards and guidelines under one comprehensive system and this will be a major focus of this project. (3) Three generations of competency-based professional development system under development and refinement since at least 1991. The applicant failed to include Table (A)(1)-12 in the application, which would have provided data regarding the current status of New Mexico's Kindergarten Entry Assessment. More specifically, the table would have provided data regarding the status of children at kindergarten entry, including data on the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers. Although the applicant indicates that a majority of the children in New Mexico are considered to be Children with High Needs, the provision of data requested in the Table would have further highlighted the

needs of the population of particular focus. While the overall current status in key areas that inform the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system is excellent, the key areas of early learning and development workforce credentials, health promotion practices, and integrated data elements do not currently appear to be as well developed as other key areas. According to data presented in Table (A)(1)(5), the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in New Mexico in state-funded preschool decreased by 528 children from 2010 to 2011 and the participation decreased in Programs receiving CCDF funds decreased by 1835 from 2010 to 2011. The applicant failed to provide clear information to help explain the decreased number of children in these programs. Table (A)(1)-(4) indicates a \$14,213,199 decrease from 2010 to 2011 in funding for Early Learning and Development. The Table clearly indicates where the decreases took place with respect to the type of investment and when the decrease took place, but the applicant failed to provide potentially important contextual information in the narrative to elucidate reasons for the significant decrease or how this could impact the proposed project.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant clearly describes its reform agenda, which builds on its progress to date. The reform agenda is comprised of the FOCUS TQRIS, scholarships to teachers for teacher practice improvements, Early Childhood Investment Zones, and a robust data system. At the foundation of the agenda is an intensive on-site professional development consultation model and an individualized quality improvement (or maintenance) plan for every early childhood program. The applicant provides a clear rationale for selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area and why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals. The applicant indicates that it will have a special emphasis on children who live in rural and frontier communities of New Mexico, but the applicant does not provide baseline data or benchmarks for improvements for this specific group of children. This makes it difficult to determine how ambitious and achievable the reform agenda is. The applicant indicates that the reform agenda builds on the Early Childhood Investment Act, which provides the mandate for establishing Early Childhood Investment Zones. Later in the application the applicant indicates that it will work with five communities in this capacity; however, insufficient information is provided, such as the size of the communities or exactly how the work will be carried out, which makes it difficult to determine how feasible and achievable the reform effort is. Finally, the applicant indicates that some communities already have capacity to provide high quality programs and to serve Children with High Needs while others do not and will require more intensive consultation and community mobilization. However, the applicant does not give any indication of the number of communities that fall within each group, making it difficult to determine how achievable the ambitious plan is.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	5

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant provides a clear and strong commitment of the State plan by participating agencies as evidenced by a signed MOU between the Public Education Department, the State of New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, and the Department of Health. Overall, the MOU provides a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of each partner agency. The applicant indicates that three state agencies will be responsible for implementing the plan and provides an organizational chart, which indicates a clear management and governance structure for the project. The organizational chart along with the narrative indicates which specific agencies (and offices/departments and advisory committee within the agencies) will be responsible for managing and implementing different aspects of the project. One strength of the application is that the applicant indicates that it will contract with an external evaluation consultant to assess implementation of TQRIS, the Investment Zones, and implementation of the improved data system. The applicant describes a process for the continuous use of data to inform program operations. Additionally, the applicant will develop an evaluation team comprised of stakeholder representatives to oversee and to monitor all evaluation activities. This will allow for continuous feedback processes to monitor how well the project is meeting its desired goals. The applicant demonstrates support from stakeholders and intermediaries as evidenced by letters of support from 16 agencies/entities focused on various and key aspects of the proposed project (i.e., New Mexico Early Childhood Higher Education Task Force, New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership). The MOU does not provide information regarding how the Participating State Agencies will leverage existing funding to support the State Plan. The applicant organization does not clearly describe or depict in the organizational chart how some of the other partners will be involved in the organizational structure for managing the project (i.e., Children's Cabinet, Early Childhood Advisory Council, evaluation consultant). Although the applicant indicates that it is committed to engaging a broad stakeholder base to garner support for its efforts and that it has included letters of support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, the applicant does not provide a plan for when and how it 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. The applicant provides a very general process for decision making, including the method and process for making policy and operational decisions. The applicant organization does not provide letters of support from local community members, such as tribal leaders (where appropriate) or parent organizations. Additionally, several of the letters of support are very general and do not detail how Early Learning Intermediary Organizations will be involved in the project.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	16	10

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant clearly indicates the amount of funds budgeted to Participating State Agencies, the 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 (i.e., \$37,832,823 in grant funds to CYFD for TQRIS, Investment Zones, project evaluation, professional development, data systems, and grantee technical assistance project). Although Table (A)(4)-1 is provided, the applicant does not provide specific examples of how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from federal, state, private, and local sources. The applicant briefly addresses sustainability in different sections of the application for different components of the proposed project, but more specific information on project sustainability was needed (i.e., needed a comprehensive picture of sustainability for the project after the funding period). The applicant organization does not provide enough information in the budget narrative to assess costs that are reasonable in relation to the design of the activities described. For instance, the budget narrative indicates five communities will be involved in the Investment Zones; however, the narrative provides very general descriptions of the scope of work. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the allocated budget is adequate to meet the objectives and outcomes. Similarly, descriptions of project personnel do not provide enough detail on their specific roles to assess how adequate the resource allocation is.

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 applicant is implementing its third generation of a tiered TQRIS, and this proposed project will further support expansion of this TQRIS (expansion is called FOCUS) statewide. This TQRIS expansion will be a tiered system and based on the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten. The applicant provides a clear description of the tiered system, including a table listing areas for which standards had not been previously well articulated and implemented for all programs (health, safety, and health promotion practices, early childhood educator qualifications, comprehensive program assessment and continuous quality improvement, authentic child assessment process, and family engagement strategies). FOCUS TQRIS is comprehensive as evidenced by articulation of Early Learning and Development Standards, a Comprehensive Assessment System, Early Childhood Educator Qualifications, Family engagement strategies, Health promotion practices, and Effective data practices. Standards at each of the proposed levels clearly differentiate each level. The applicant is focused on continuous quality improvement processes and has indicated selection of measures that can be used to continuously assess programs and children from which plans will be developed to either maintain the level or work toward the next level. The applicant already has implemented a tiered TQRIS system that has been linked to the State's licensing system. The FOCUS TQRIS will be expanded to home visiting/early intervention programs in years two and three of the project as well as normally exempt programs operating in the public school system. The applicant indicates that it will identify or develop appropriate program assessment tools for continuous quality improvement in home visiting programs. The New Mexico FOCUS TQRIS Logic Model presented by the applicant in the proposal does not specify indicators. That is, how the intermediate, long-term, and ultimate outcomes will be measured, or in other words, the evidence that the outcomes were achieved is not articulated. For example, the applicant does not indicate how it will determine if parents use the STAR ratings to evaluate programs. Some of the FOCUS TQRIS standards are more measureable than others, and the applicant does not indicate how the standards will be measured. For instance, under the 4-Star Authentic Child Assessment Process-Early learning Guidelines & Curriculum Planning, it is unclear how the evidence of racial and cultural diversity in the environment will be measured and evaluated.

	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 applicant already has implemented a tiered TQRIS system that has been linked to the State's licensing system for all state-funded preschool programs. Attainment of Level 2 standards are required for licensing and continued child care subsidies. Thus, the AIM HIGH TQRIS was no longer a voluntary initiative. All registered unlicensed family care homes are currently eligible to participate in the current (second generation) AIM HIGH TQRIS, and according to the applicant those participating have become licensed. The applicant proposes a High Quality Plan that will expand the proposed third generation FOCUS TQRIS to all (870) licensed center-based programs already participating in AIM HIGH. The applicant will first focus on programs that are accredited and serving the highest percentage of children on subsidy and will start with programs with a Level 5 accreditation. Additionally, the applicant will expand FOCUS TQRIS to publically-funded home visiting/early intervention programs (state-funded home visiting programs will be required to participate), programs normally exempt from licensing because they operate in the public school system, IDEA Part C programs, and Early Head Start programs in years two and three of the grant period. Finally, registered/unlicensed family care providers will be encouraged

to participate in the new quality rating system voluntarily. The applicant has developed a plan for providing consultation to assist program transition to the FOCUS TQRIS. The applicant will require registered/unlicensed child care providers to participate in the FOCUS TQRIS if they are serving two or more children. The applicant does not describe how it will implement effective practices 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, particularly for families identified by the applicant as a special focus of the project (families in rural and frontier communities). Although the applicant provides the required Performance Measures Table for (B)(2)(c), and it appears ambitious, however, it is difficult to determine how achievable the plan is because the specific plan for providing consultation services was not provided. The applicant does not provide information regarding its rationale for how it determined the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the TQRIS. The application would have been strengthened by a rationale for why some types of programs will reach 100 percent and others will not.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(3)

The applicant already has a well-developed system and personnel in place (Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Programs and Program Development Specialists) for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in its existing TQRIS system. Building on this existing structure, the applicant proposes to better coordinate and supervise training and technical assistance, consultation, monitoring and verification of TQRIS rating criteria and levels. This coordination and supervision will be provided by the University of New Mexico. The applicant does not provide enough information for how the rating and monitoring will be carried out (i.e., how many Early Learning Consultants will be hired, how many programs it is anticipated they will work with, etc.). This makes it difficult to determine how achievable the plan is. The applicant does not indicate how it will address the unique needs of New Mexico's special populations of Children with High Needs, particularly children living in rural and frontier areas.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicant has existing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve. For example, it provides higher reimbursement rates to programs that have a higher level of quality and accreditation and rates within each level have increased over time. The applicant does not appear to have previously developed supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs but plans to do so as a part of this initiative. The applicant anticipates that the proposed FOCUS TQRIS will demonstrate an increase of 466 programs at the top tiers of the quality rating system by the end of the grant period. The applicant has set an ambitious target for increasing 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 by 22,302 children. Despite indicating that it will developed supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs, the applicant provides insufficient details on its plan for doing so.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (B)(5)

The applicant has a plan to design and to implement an evaluation of FOCUS TQRIS and will hire an independent evaluator. The evaluation will validate whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflects differential levels of program quality. The planned evaluation also will assess the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. The applicant recognizes the importance of quality improvement plans and assessment of child outcomes and its FOCUS TQRIS will move toward measuring these processes and outcomes rather than observed inputs to quality. Given that the applicant has identified outcomes in its logic model and has specified the use of some specific measures/tools in Focus TQRIS, the application could have been strengthened by the identification of indicators and outcome measures in the proposal.

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.	30	28

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 applicant has a fully implemented Early Learning and Development Standards (New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten) that are used statewide by all Early Learning and Development Programs and voluntarily in Head Start, home visiting, and child care. The Standards are comprehensive in that they cover seven developmental domains associated with academic content areas and school readiness and are inclusive of children with special needs and those who speak a language other than English in the home. The Standards also include benchmarks and child outcomes. The applicant has engaged a number of important stakeholders, including local groups, experts and consultants, and groups focused on ethnic minority populations, in the development and refinement of the Standards. This has ensured Standards that are developmentally, locally, geographically, and culturally situated and appropriate across all age groups. Additionally, the Standards have been cross walked with five other standards, curricula, and early childhood areas. The Standards cross walk is comprehensive and is evidence that they are aligned with other guidelines and standards, including Kindergarten benchmarks and Standards. The applicant indicates that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in several areas, including early literacy and mathematics. There is a policy brief included in the application, which defines developmental appropriate practice, which provides guidance to programs. The applicant has existing supports in place and plans for additional integrated supports to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs. These supports include consultants who will provide training, on-site program visits, and ongoing monitoring. Professional development also will be provided to consultants. Although cultural considerations are addressed in the Standards, more specific information about linguistic considerations could have been provided in the narrative to demonstrate how the needs of children who speak languages other than English are addressed.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	23

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 has an excellent plan for building on previous TQRIS such that this FOCUS TQRIS will add a child developmental screen measure (ASQ), measures of environmental quality (e.g., CLASS), and measures of program leadership, management, and administration (Program Administration Scale) to further develop Comprehensive Assessment Systems. Although the applicant has developed a plan for providing ongoing training and technical assistance using Child Care Inclusion Specialists, Early Childhood Consultants, and instruction at institutions of higher education, it is unclear how the work actually will be carried out, such as the number of sites for which each consultant will be responsible.

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
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>The applicant has an excellent 19 year history of developing and implementing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, which is detailed in the New Mexico Common Core Content and Competencies: Early Childhood Educator. The applicant already has a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees (career lattice) aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant provides an excellent table in an Appendix indicating which specific courses address each of the New Mexico Early Childhood Education Competency Areas. The applicant provides a clear and detailed accounting of past accomplishments and the process of developing and implementing an excellent system of common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and engaging postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant plans to work with the remaining three institutions in the State become aligned with the common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework by the end of year two. No significant weaknesses noted.</p>		

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators In Improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	17
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		

Comments on (D)(2)

As a part of its reform agenda related to improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of early childhood educators, the applicant has a very good plan to publically report on aggregated data on early childhood educator development and retention as well as other characteristics of educators. The applicant plans to work with the remaining three institutions in the State to become aligned with the common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework by the end of year two. Thus, as a result of the project, the curricula of all institutions of higher education will be aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Other than scholarships, the applicant does not provide enough detail for how it will recruit and retain new educators or specific practices.

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	13
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Note: this response has been amended by the reviewer. Due to an inconsistency with the response to Competitive Priority #3, this response has been amended to 14 instead of 13 points. Amended March 20, 2012.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(1)

The applicant indicates an existing strong commitment to the use of age-appropriate assessments to determine the placement of children in kindergarten at the proper instructional level as evidenced by legislation passed in 2000 requiring this practice. It appears that the assessment used (DIBELS) was limited in scope. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment that has been implemented was not used as an accountability tool but to determine instructional levels for children. This practice will continue with the implementation of a more comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Assessment planned for this project. To implement universal Kindergarten Entry Assessment, the applicant will use a phased approach, which is consistent with guidelines provided by this initiative. Additionally, the applicant indicates that existing state and federal funds will be used to support and to sustain universal Kindergarten Entry Assessment, which is a requirement of this initiative. The applicant indicates that it will modify the current observe/document/assess/planning cycle to better align to kindergarten programs and will be aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and will cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The applicant organization will contract with an external evaluator to validate the current PreK Observational Assessment tool. The applicant does not provide enough information in this section about the current PreK Observational Assessment tool to determine the tool's appropriateness. It is unclear if the existing PreK Observational Assessment tool includes psychometrically sound measures that are appropriate for use with children of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds or children with special needs.

	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 applicant has a High-Quality plan to enhance the State's existing data systems that are currently unaligned and serve different purposes. The purpose of the enhancement is to align those data systems, particularly between EPICS and the P-20 data system warehouse system to improve instruction, practice, services, and policies. The applicant has clearly articulated what data systems are currently in place, where the gaps are in the current data system needs, and the purpose/goals of the enhancement proposed. The proposed data system has all of the Essential Data Elements, and it will be linked across programs and time by a unique child identifier, educator identifier, etc. The applicant indicates that the database and data collection will meet the Data System Oversight Requirements and will comply with the required of Federal, State, and local privacy laws such as HIPAA. No major weaknesses noted.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	220

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The applicant already has in place a TQRIS system in which all licensed programs participate. This project proposes an expansion of FOCUS TQRIS and all licensed providers will transition to this system. The proposed project also seeks to include all unlicensed providers, particularly unregulated child care providers in FOCUS. The applicant provides a very good strategy for outreaching to un-regulated and non-licensed child care providers, including providers who care for two or more unrelated children. More information is needed on the implementation for how the plan will be carried out.

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 organization addressed selection criterion (E)(1) and earned at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The applicant has met this priority as evidenced by its High-Quality Plan that is comprehensive and will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs. The applicant builds on a 20 year history in the State of legislation, policies, and practices to further develop and enhance the existing very strong system for promoting school readiness for Children with High Needs. The applicant proposes specific strategies in: (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children by continuing to fully implement comprehensive, statewide, and aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards Early Learning and Development Standards (New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten) by all Early Learning and Development Programs and voluntarily in Head Start, home visiting, and child care; (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, including the New Mexico Common Core Content and Competencies: Early Childhood Educator and plans for engaging postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress, including universal kindergarten entry assessment to determine the placement of children in kindergarten at the proper instructional level and to enhance the State's existing data systems to align those data systems, particularly between EPICS and the P-20 data system warehouse system to improve instruction, practice, services, and policies. Additionally, the applicant proposes to further promote school readiness for children with High Needs by including all unlicensed providers, particularly unregulated child care providers in FOCUS TORIS.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # NM-5025

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 7:25 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 18

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)

New Mexico has a long history of building an infrastructure that includes many of the emphases of the RTT-ELC grant, including state-level initiatives to coordinate early childhood systems at the agency-level. Successive governors have created top-level positions and committees to coordinate and integrate services, resulting in the current structure of three primary agencies and a Children's Cabinet. An active state-wide business group (Early Learning Advisory Council) has taken an integral role in these efforts and was also involved in developing this proposal, indicating wide community commitment to young children and to creating a solid early childhood system. Each of the agencies has obtained grants to work on various portions of the Early Learning Plan, and in 2009 a newly reconstituted Advisory Council with a broader membership was initiated to develop a coordinated system for early childhood, resulting in a cross-agency Early Childhood Strategic Plan. Until the economic downturn, financial investment was increasing across all programs; in 2010 and 2011, most programs have been cut by a small amount with the exception of Title I and state contributions to CCDF (Child Care Development Fund), which continue to increase. Over time, increases to subsidy rates have been linked to the TQRIS, with substantial increases for higher quality programs. The number of children with High Needs served shows similar patterns, with increases until 2010-2011, and then decreases or level numbers in all but Head Start and Title I. Notably, as child care programs improved through use of a quality rating system, the minimum requirements for entry into licensing also were raised. Commitment to children and families is obvious and long-standing; as a result, many of the structures required for the proposal have had time to evolve and improve through multiple iterations, and are already in place, although they are not yet in place across all programs. Early Learning Standards for birth-3 and 3-Kindergarten are in their third generation, with the most recent changes emphasizing learning outcomes for children and a formative assessment process using the ELS. These are linked tightly to the TQRIS, in which increasing use of the assessment components occurs at each level. Gaps are clearly shown in the tables, which indicate that different components (e.g., screening) are not present in all programs and are not standard across programs. A similar picture is shown for health screening and promotion. Unexpectedly, health screening and promotion seem particularly lacking in programs under Parts C and B of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Development Act), as well as in programs receiving CCDF funds prior to entry into the Tier system.

Health literacy also appears to be missing in the TQRIS system. The professional development system is linked to a progression of credentials and degrees, based on a competency framework. Both are linked to the TQRIS. Almost all college and university programs are aligned with the framework as well. Teacher certification for public school programs is inclusive, blending early childhood education with early childhood special education, and incorporating a focus on cultural and linguistic diversity; the competency framework also incorporates these principles. With RTT, the number of educators holding credentials across the types of programs will be increased, and additional educators from across programs will be enrolled into the credentialing system and the TQRIS. A variety of family engagement is also obvious from the tables. Each type of program has its own requirements, and some have substantial requirements for a variety of ways of supporting families. Family support and involvement is built into the TQRIS system, with the number and types of activities increasing at each level. This also is emphasized in the credentialing framework. Thus, as educators and programs increasingly participate, opportunities for family engagement will also increase. Similarly, a variety of data systems are already in place but not aligned with one another. As shown later (Section E), these will provide the basis for creating an early childhood data structure. Overall, the proposal establishes the status of the state with respect to early childhood services. However, Table A1-12 (status of K entry assessment) is missing from the proposal. Although a new system will be created and validated as part of RTT-ELC, data are not presented from the previous system (based on DIBELS). A rationale is needed for not including this data. To further support gaps in relation to child outcomes, data from the annual Report Card should be provided. In further interpreting the tables and the activities presented later in the proposal, it would be helpful to have more information on the state-funded Pre-K and Title I programs with respect to criteria for services as well as the relationship between these two programs and who is served, since both appear to serve a small percentage of children as compared to Head Start and CCDF funded child care.

	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)

Goals for improving child outcomes statewide and for closing the readiness gap underlie all other parts of this grant, although no child outcome data are provided to establish current status in relation to these overarching goals. A major focus of the project is on equitable access to high quality programs, as defined by the TQRIS, across types of programs and statewide. Clear goals and rationales are established with respect to each of the Focused Investment Areas, all of which address infrastructure development and build on the considerable amount of progress that the state has already made in these areas and/or on integrating the past experience and resources from the participating agencies. Overall, in each area, activities funded by this grant will be used to integrate as well as to coordinate and articulate many of these structures across all early childhood programs. Specifically, the Early Learning Standards (and the areas included within them) will be used as the foundation for all of the other structures; the ELS, TQRIS, and competency/credentialing structure are well integrated with one another, and will be applied across types of programs statewide. Further, requirements are phased in logically across the different program Tiers. Together with the planned data system, these address the Comprehensive Assessment System as well as educators' and programs' ability to contribute to and use assessment data. The same authentic assessment/planning process using the ELS has been built into the newest TQRIS and competency framework, and activities are planned for putting this process into place from birth-3rd grade, including using it as the basis for a new Kindergarten entry assessment. A specific, targeted community-based approach will be used within Early Childhood Investment Zones to infuse resources and build capacity related to the characteristics and needs of each zone, although specific detail is lacking on how this will be addressed given the variation in types of programs across the state. Consultant support will be provided directly to classrooms. There also is a commitment from all three agencies to promote and expect participation in these systems. Overall, the project focuses on coordinated system reform and on strengthening and widening the use of structures within the system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

Each of the three primary agencies that provide early childhood services have signed a joint statement of commitment to this project, and each has an appropriate, prescribed scope of work that fits the design of the grant. A structure to facilitate collaboration is already in place in the state, promoted by an overarching early childhood committee. An Advisory Council is already in place across agencies. A decision-making process, with recourse for disputes, is clearly outlined. Stakeholders, including educators, parents, and business representatives, have been involved in developing many parts of this proposal and are represented on the Advisory Council. The goal of the project is to strengthen the infrastructure and to put the parts of it in place across the programs that are the responsibility of each of the agencies. Letters are provided from stakeholders and intermediary organizations including professional organizations, business leaders and universities, although the Division for Early Childhood, the professional organization for providers to children with disabilities, is not included. The applicant also did not provide letters from tribal groups; these are particularly important since tribal areas may be participating within the planned Investment Zones. The organizational chart is confusing in that the Advisory Committee for this project should be at a higher level, over all three participating agencies, or a rationale provided for where it is located. A rationale also should be provided for having the Public Education Department as the lead agency, since many of the structures that will be adopted and expanded throughout the agencies fall under CYFD. Evidence of collaboration and unified intent is weakened by not including a list of the sets of standards within the scope of work for each of the agencies as well as in the joint MOU, in order to demonstrate that all are committed to promoting and providing access related to each of the parts of the structure. Letters of support also are not specific with respect to the roles that the writers will have in the project. Overall, however, the plan for this project extends and is coordinated with other state level initiatives including an existing state plan for an early learning system with many of the same components as described in this proposal. This project will build on very strong

state and statewide structures and commitment.

	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)

Table A41 includes overall amounts from federal and state funds that will contribute to achieving the goals of this project. Broad areas of responsibility are listed in the narrative. Detail is lacking with respect to which activities RTT-ELC funding will support in comparison to other sources; this is needed in order to evaluate how each source will contribute to the different planned goals of the project. Information also is needed on how these will be broken down by type of program (e.g., Head Start, Title I, Part B). For example, it is not clear from the budget narrative which activities will be supported within the Kindergarten Entry Assessment Project by RTT funds as compared to those from other sources of funds; this is needed to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of RTT dollars and whether RTT costs are reasonable and necessary. Contracts will be used to support many primary activities, including validation and evaluation activities; this seems reasonable since these activities relate to infrastructure development. Some costs need further explanation (e.g., the purchase of equipment in the budget for Public Health). One concern is that no new staff are shown in the budget for the CYFD, which is responsible for managing many of the structure-building activities in the grant. Overall, however, the budget is directly related to the goals stated and seems to provide reasonable support for accomplishing the planned activities. No funds go toward direct services, so it is likely that the gains sustained in infrastructure, collaboration, and expansion of the number of high quality programs and credentialed staff will persist beyond this grant.

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)

A statewide TQRIS is already in place and available across types of programs. The system is based directly on the Early Learning Standards. Comprehensive assessment, early childhood educator qualifications, family engagement, health promotion, and effective data practices are built into the TQRIS through increasing requirements at each of the Tiers. The Early Learning Standards are used as the basis for assessment and curriculum planning, and therefore address all areas of learning and development. Expectations for Tiers are clearly laid out across levels. Expectations for entry into the tiered system have been raised over time as requirements for initial licensure have incorporated expectations that were previously within the tiers, thus raising licensing standards across the state. Stakeholders, including New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC) and other experts such as WestEd were involved in developing and modifying the TQRIS, the ELS, and the related competency framework and credentialing framework over time. All elements are tightly linked and interdependent. Table B1-1 shows program standards for each type of program in relation to program elements, although it is not possible to tell whether the elements meet the broad definitions included in RTT (e.g., Comprehensive Assessment Systems); specific information with respect to these sub-elements is lacking. Responses for some cells in the table are also counter-intuitive; for example, no entry is presented for family engagement under Part B. The descriptions of separate requirements for different levels of the TQRIS are quite helpful in showing increasing requirements at higher levels. Overall, the TQRIS in New Mexico is well in place and well integrated with other aspects of the overall plan.

	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)

A primary goal of New Mexico's project is to include all types of programs and all early educators within the same TQRIS and credentialing systems. This goal is embedded within the agreement among participating agencies, and also within the planned early childhood data system that will be developed through this project. It is also apparent in that specific approaches previously used primarily in one agency will now be used by the whole system. For example, the incorporation of the assessment-curriculum cycle that is now incorporated within the TQRIS was previously used only in the programs funded by the Education agency. A variety of programs and staff already participate in these systems, and the number of each will be expanded through activities of the grant. As part of the grant, TQRIS criteria will be modified to be more compatible with home visiting and other family programs so that they also may be a part of these systems. Training and resources will be used to transition programs under the older TQRIS system to be re-approved at the same level under the new system, which incorporates a greater focus on diversity and on early learning. Over time, the state has implemented systems of

support and incentives (e.g., increased subsidy rates, professional development, materials) to increase the number of high quality programs within areas with high numbers of children and families with High Needs. This project will add additional training and consultation capability to increase this process irrespective of type of program. Family child care providers, particularly in targeted neighborhoods, will be encouraged to participate in a variety of types of activities to enable this. A systematic plan is provided for which programs will be targeted in successive years of the project, and covers all types of programs. Targets set for increasing the number and percent of participating programs indicate a high level of commitment, with the goal of 100% of state funded preschools, Part C, Part B and Title I programs participating by the final year. Targets for other types of programs (such as home visiting) are based on the historical growth rate. Information is missing on why lower targets are set for Head Start and Early Head Start, particularly since some of these programs already seem to be part of the system.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(3)

The TQRIS tool, FOCUS, is a new iteration of the state's TQRIS, building on a tool that is already solidly in place. Currently, Program Development Specialists provide training and technical assistance to programs participating in TQRIS, as well as to staff who provide monitoring and verification. These functions will now be combined under the same umbrella, and also cover staff who support infant/toddler programs and those who support preschool programs; this should yield a more efficient use of resources as well as reduce duplication at the program level. Cross-training across program types for consultants will occur over the first years, yielding a gradual shift. The validity of the FOCUS will be established as part of the overall plan, through studies provided by a contracted research firm. Inter-rater reliability will use existing procedures based on benchmark performance, aiming for 85-90% reliability, indicating a high level of concern for quality. Reliability on the ERS and on the CLASS will be accomplished and maintained via comparison to benchmark raters. Greater emphasis will be given than in the past to using results for program improvement rather than for compliance, supporting a new emphasis on self-directed growth within programs. New materials will be developed to market the program to parents as well as to staff in all early childhood programs using approaches that will make the information easily available. For example, the "star" designation for the program will be posted at the program, and materials developed to describe criteria used to determine the rating will be available through the program. A directory of programs will be posted on the web-site, as will licensing history. Programs will be monitored for maintenance on an annual basis. As noted earlier, this plan pays careful attention to detail, representing a shift in focus of the TQRIS toward child learning outcomes across all types of programs, while maintaining the quality of the current system as the new one is phased in and validated. However, additional information is needed as to the number of consultants to be hired, their responsibilities, and how they will be trained; this will be especially important in the rural areas targeted in the proposal. Additional information is also needed on activities that will be used to convince parents to place their children in higher quality programs; this will be especially important in the rural, remote areas that are part of the targeted investment areas.

	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)

Support and incentives for continuous improvement for the majority of programs include substantial training and consultation, as well as increased subsidy rates for serving children with High Needs; the combination will make a greater number of higher-tier programs available to more children. An even more intensive approach will be taken in the targeted areas, where data indicate not only that virtually 100% of the children are at risk, but where communities have not previously shown that they have the organizational resources or infrastructure to develop and sustain change. Communities will be selected based on both need and on readiness to participate in capacity building, using a specific assessment tool, indicating concern for objective, evidence-based selection as well as for sustainability after the grant. The model to be used in these communities, which also have no early childhood programs at Levels 4 or 5, will be to begin with home visiting and gradually work on capacity building using a specific model, eventually achieving a range of services. The capacity building approach builds on a specific model (Getting to Outcomes) that has achieved beneficial results in a current SAMHSA-funded program in one county. By using this model, New Mexico will be able to incorporate lessons learned from a similar, high-needs community. The state describes its history of raising the bar to achieve higher quality, as demonstrated by raising criteria for child care licensing once a sufficient number of programs had achieved a new level. As a result, there has been substantial growth in the number of low income children on subsidy in high quality programs (Tiers 4 or 5), increasing from 9% to 26% since 2003. Thus, the state has clearly demonstrated its ability to achieve higher quality over time, and has provided a systematic, sequential plan to accomplish this in the Investment Zones. Working families are supported by numerous policies and procedures including tiered reimbursement rates; the latter, applied previously in child care, will through the RTT grant be expanded across other types of programs, providing many more options for families. The new TQRIS, the FOCUS, focuses more directly on processes to support children's learning; staff in all types of programs should be able to more easily understand the link between specific program requirements and how children will benefit from their actions. One aspect of the grant that is confusing with respect to implementation of the new FOCUS is that the tables appear to include only the programs that are shifting from TQRIS ratings to FOCUS ratings; other programs and types of programs, including new programs in Head Start, state Pre-K, Title I, and Parts B and C of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), appear to be missing. Numbers shown for children to benefit from the project also don't seem to reflect increased numbers of children who would be expected to benefit from being in high quality programs. For example, some numbers in the table decrease from beginning to end, while it would be expected that they would increase based on new programs entering the system. Overall, the numbers provided seem to underestimate the actual impact of the grant. Further, while the approach to the Investment Zones appears sound as well as responsive to local needs, a description is lacking of the types of programs (such as Head Start and public pre-kindergarten) that might already be operating in these communities and how they may already meet some basic requirements.

	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 proposal provides an excellent description of the purposes of validation in comparison to evaluation within the context of establishing the validity of a TQRIS. An external evaluator will be contracted to design and implement both validation and evaluation studies related to establishing the validity of the new TQRIS, thereby providing a stronger, evidence-based state model. The studies will have four emphases: examining the validity of underlying concepts; examining the psychometric properties (including reliability) of the measures; assessing scores on individual components within the overall score; and relating ratings to child outcomes. The results will yield solid information for undertaking any needed revisions in model or assessments. Evaluation studies will use data from independent assessors to compare child outcomes between the old and the new TQRIS as programs transfer from one to the other, and will also compare across different Tiers, enabling the state to determine whether changes in programs are making any difference for children's learning. If possible, randomization of programs into

training for the new TQRIS will be used to ensure that currently higher quality programs are not all trained first, thus strengthening the results. Overall, this is a very well thought out design that makes sense within the context of the overall plan. What is lacking is information of specific measures and sources of data for different types of outcomes.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	27

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)

Early Learning Standards are presented for birth-3 and for 3-Kindergarten. The standards were developed with disability, cultural and linguistic diversity infused throughout, and have been revised further with these in mind; children with High Needs are further defined by an array of potential risk factors. The revised ELS was reviewed for adherence to cultural and linguistic principles, and also for incorporation of infant mental health principles. An examination of specific items indicates that all Essential Domains are included within the domains listed. The standards have been cross-walked with a variety of curricula (including a curriculum used by some Native American areas and programs) and frameworks (e.g., Head Start) used in early childhood as well as with the state's content standards for Kindergarten and the National Core standards for Kindergarten. Standards in literacy and numeracy are aligned with language arts and math for Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Content standards up to grade 3 are also inherent in the Kindergarten Core Standards that are part of the larger framework for the national Common Core that the state has adopted. The stated goal is that Kindergarten teachers will be able to use the same ELS and the same assessment-planning-review process as used in early childhood, and project activities are described in other sections to support this goal. These cross-walks enable the ELS to be used across systems and ages. A strength of the proposed project is that the state's ELS form the basis for most other parts of the framework by being tightly linked to the TQRIS, which outlines increasing implementation of program standards curriculum development and assessment. Training and consultation are provided to support progress through the TQRIS, including the new focus on an assessment-curriculum-review process. The ELS are also used as the basis for formative assessment, with indicators and scoring rubrics for child outcomes. The ELS are also reflected in the workforce framework through delineation of competencies. Professional development activities (preservice and inservice) are based directly on the competency framework and thus the early learning standards. Programs will receive consultant visits approximately twice a month to provide support on implementing the curriculum process in support of the ELS. Training sessions on the ELS have been and will be provided throughout the state to a broad range of participants. Common courses have been developed and adopted across virtually all colleges and universities that provide courses to support the competency framework. Overall, the link among all

levels is set using a 5% benchmark. A table is provided showing the current number and expected increases across the 4 years of the grant. The quality of faculty teaching in colleges and universities is also a target, with the goal of increasing the number of faculty with Master's degrees in early childhood. A specialized course will be offered for a cohort of faculty who will be trained in an approach developed by Bank Street and adopted as New Mexico's early learning curricular approach, thus ensuring expertise in this approach among faculty who will be teaching providers participating in the career lattice. This section did not receive full points because no description is provided of current statewide inservice and consultation efforts and whether these are currently or will be used to support progression through the competency framework. The choice of the Bank Street model also needs to be supported. While a reasonable 5% projection is set for moving educators to higher levels, it is not clear how the 5% is reflected in some of the entries; these need further clarification.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>New Mexico will select a common assessment tool that will fully align with the ELS for K-3. Assessment will cover all domains, so that data on each domain will be available to K teachers to guide their instruction. Overall status at Kindergarten entry will be used to provide information to policy-makers, and ongoing assessment will be used to determine if impacts are sustained through 3rd grade. Administration of the K entry assessment will be accomplished with existing state funds, and administered by teachers, making it easily sustainable. The proposed plan is to contract with an external entity to validate the use of the Pre-K Observational Assessment tool for use in Kindergarten, including which of the standards and rubrics measure the 5 domains of school readiness. Once the validation is complete (Year 2), the assessment will be administered to all entering Kindergarten children (phased in during Years 3 and 4). It will provide not only an overall score, but also data related to each domain of learning and development. As part of the new early childhood data system (birth-3rd grade, Section E), other data also will be collected and entered on other Essential Data Elements, including a child identifier and educator identifier. The new system will allow looking at sub-groups of children. Data also will be entered into the Longitudinal Data System. The project will support a training and technical assistance provider to train teachers and administrators to use these data for instruction. To support sustainability of gains, the project will work with districts to use existing funds (e.g., Title I and IDEA) to support early intervention for children identified through the assessment. K-3 teachers and school leaders also will be trained to use data-driven instruction using the same model as is used in Pre-K. While considerable RTT resources will be used to develop this tool and train educators and programs in their use, actual implementation of the assessment will be accomplished using existing funds. One concern is that the turn-around time for validation of the Assessment tool for Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) may not be sufficient to make needed revisions in the tool. A validated measure against which results of the KEA can be compared is also necessary to in order to establish the validity of this instrument.</p>

	Available	Score

As noted throughout this review, New Mexico has provided a detailed description of past accomplishments, with improvements demonstrated over a long period of years and evidence of implementing a solid framework for this project. Specifically, Early Learning Standards already apply to all early childhood programs and are well integrated into the TQRIS and into the assessment process, whereas both the TQRIS and ELS form the basis for a well-articulated competency framework and supports for workforce development. Many higher education programs are already providing coursework aligned with the competencies, and others will be brought into the system through this project. Data from all programs will be included in an early childhood data base that will contain information from all of these parts of the framework. Through this grant, an already solid system will be improved and expanded across the state in a way that is responsive to particular types of communities, programs, and children and families with multiple types of needs.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NM-5025

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 7:24 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	15
<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)

Evaluation of past commitment to Early Learning and Development from evidence provided indicates the state has a strong commitment to early learning. Evidence provided indicates that New Mexico may have the capacity, based on past commitment to implement the plan outlined and to sustain grant activities once the grant is completed. The ability to sustain Early Learning and Development programs financially is based on the documented increases in funding the state preschool. State preschools were funded in 2007 at \$6,700,025 which the state increased to \$14,165,836 in 2011. Supplemental state spending on Head Start and Early Head Start decreased during the same time period by about 50%. No explanation was provided regarding these decreases and if it was a trend that would impact sustainability in the future. Components that show the state has a strong history of supporting early learning are the increase of high needs children receiving services and early learning legislation and policies indicating the capacity of the State to implement a plan that will result in a high quality program that is available to children with high needs. The number of children in all programs, except home visiting, has increased since 2007. Participation in Public pre-K has grown from 2,194 in 2007 to 4,435 in 2011. The New Mexico Childhood Act passed in 2011 to streamline services and consolidate seven state service divisions into one which provides streamlining and reduction of duplication of services. The applicant's present TQRIS has components which are missing or not fully developed. The State's plan includes addressing missing or not fully developed components such as Measures of Quality of Child Interaction and screening measures. Components vary in their implementation at this time. Health promotion practices that include follow up and referral and health literacy are required at some levels of the present TQRIS but not all. Children in Head Start programs health promotion practices include lead screening and hematocrit. The same variability is seen when looking at current practices of requiring family involvement. Some programs promote in depth involvement, while others require minimal involvement. The States common core content framework for Early Childhood Educators and alignment across the state universities and community colleges for a common course of study for Early Childhood Educators is well articulated and would be a model for many others. The pathway has a 45 hour entry level course as well as traditional programs. The design thoughtfully considers their workforce and what is needed to encourage them to take a chance on becoming better educated in their field. The current lattice moves from entry level to PH.D.

The New Mexico Public Education Department proposes to build on the pre-K assessment and will provide the financial support in implementing the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State demonstrates that it understands the importance in using a TQRIS in raising the bar for early childhood programs. New Mexico is presently on its third generation of their TQRIS system and stated that they have learned from the past. Refinements to the TQRIS are based on lesson learned from the two previous TQRIS

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(2)

The plan submitted by the state discussed needs, present practices, plans to address concerns and timelines. They propose to implement a "system of systems" rather than isolated programs providing services for children which may mean duplication of services. The State plan articulates the FOCUS TQRIS system, which is the third generation of the TQRIS system in New Mexico. Timelines and guidelines were provided as to how one system would be phased out and the next will be phased in. The plan includes information to provide understanding, training and a gradual phase out/in for present programs in the star program to the new tiered system which seems feasible and provides for the centers to move toward the goal of ready for kindergarten. All state funded programs will be required to be part of the new TQRIS system by year three. Clear incentives for being a high quality program have been in place for those programs with CCDF children for moving toward a higher level on the TQRIS. Their increasing practice of providing more money per child for progression on the TQRIS is that one sustains forward movement for programs. More information on what incentives will be used or the plan to identify them for populations who do not receive CCDF funding and may be required to participate as a state funded program was not evident. There was a clear plan of how the state would reach out to more rural communities using local resources. The state did a commendable job in recognizing that the new FOCUS TQRIS system will need to be adapted for home providers who may only care for two children and provided for that differentiation in the FOCUS TQRIS as well as providing recognition for their achievement in the form of a certificate that can be displayed. The applicant also indicates that the TQRIS will need to be adapted for home visitors. Information of what those changes might look like would provide a broader understanding of how it will work for different programs. The TQRIS submitted started at a three star level. Level 1 and 2 are indicated as being basic licensing requirements. Although New Mexico has an outstanding framework for creating a Great Workforce and T.E.A.C.H. support in providing scholarships for students to advance, progress in education does not seem to be reflected in the New Mexico QRIS. The plan does not seem to articulate how the TQRIS staffing aligns with their plan for a great workforce. Level 3 staff qualifications indicate that they must have a High School Diploma or a GED which does not change at levels 4 or 5. Use of the New Mexico standards is written into both the center and family child care requirements in the FOCUS QRIS. Increasing numbers in the top tier were differentiated to make them achievable for different programs, such as home care. The state of New Mexico has done their homework in using a needs assessment that they call Investment Zones which map out communities with the most intense needs. The plan proposes to target these areas to impact those with the greatest needs. Once this is accomplished, they propose to roll out these programs to other parts of the state. Change is difficult and those authoring the plan seem to acknowledge that while proceeding to move forward with changes they recognize the needs of their communities when developing the plan. The QRIS will be fully implemented in all public funded programs and licensed programs by year three which would increase the number of children at risk in high quality programs as presently none of these programs are required to have basic licensing. The quality of this plan is high.

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

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(4)

The State plan for using existing funds to support the work of the plan appears to contain enough financial support to sustain grant activities when the grant is completed. The Public Education Department will provide \$350,000 and Child, Youth and Family Department will provide \$22,335,910 to support their scope of work. The Public Education Department indicated it would be funding all the Kindergarten entry assessment. The budget appears reasonable and adequate to support the State plan. The budget includes personnel, materials, and equipment that would be necessary for implementation. The budget contains a line item for visiting sister projects which is not addressed in the narrative. Providing this information on how visiting sister projects would help them to achieve their goal of promoting school readiness for high needs children would inform decision making on this item. The quality of the proposed plan is high.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

(1) Early Learning and Development Standards;

(2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;

(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;

(4) Family engagement strategies;

(5) Health promotion practices; and

(6) Effective data practices;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(1)

There are gaps in the TQRIS that would hinder the State plan in its quality and implementation. Specific concerns are workforce and child screening (Health Promotion) components. Staff credential requirements at Levels 3-5 for the TQRIS is a GED or high school diploma. There is no progression. Professional development is required for the Site Director and one teacher per class. Classes with more than one teacher or aide would not require other staff to have training that would inform their instruction. Missing from the TQRIS are incentives at each level that reward the staff for improving their knowledge base or require progression of skills. This part of the plan would not raise the bar for providing a great workforce. In the area of Health Promotion, the TQRIS does not require the use of a developmental screener until Level 5. Vision and hearing are screened at level 4. The State projects that 163 programs out of 1963 (8% of programs) participating in the TQRIS system (B)(4)(c)(1) will be at level 5 by 2015. While this is an achievable goal, it does not appear to be ambitious in the area of developmental screenings. The targets for numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs to participate in the program as listed in table (B)(2)(c) and appear to be ambitious yet achievable. Comprehensive Program assessment is limited at the earliest level to beginning a self-study process and becoming familiar with the process. Comprehensive Assessment practices in the TQRIS appear adequate for levels 4 and 5. Data practices are not addressed in present TQRIS. In the areas listed above the TQRIS is missing meaningful progressive program levels. The TQRIS is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Developmental Programs.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	11

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 reasonable plan for increasing the number of programs participating in the TQRIS system. As stated in the application, all publicly funded programs will participate at a 100% level by year 4, with Head Start and Early Head Start having a target of 48%. More information on tribal participation, given the absence of an MOU with tribal authorities and the lower targets for Head Start would paint a clearer picture of the state plan for tribal children with high needs and their participation in the plan. New Mexico's policies and practices to help families access high quality childcare is high quality and in place. In order to receive CCDF funds programs must be a level 2 in the present QRIS system. Given that the applicant states there are rural and "frontier" areas where they have identified that families will choose convenience over high quality, the applicant needed to more fully develop an education plan that gives more detail in how they will address this challenge to their plan. They have indicated that they will develop a certificate, similar to the one received by licensed providers, that can be displayed in homes. Present policies provide that the higher the level on the TQRIS, the larger CCDF subsidy per child that provider will receive. The targets provided by the State to promote participation in the TQRIS process will impact a large number of children but are achievable as they start with state funded preschool, Title 1, and IDEA part B programs. Quality was high with partial implementation.

	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's plan appears to be one that would provide for high quality in rating. They propose an inter-rater reliability target of 85-90% for the Environmental Rating Scale and the TQRIS. "Other tools" are mentioned but not listed. The plan presented on the use of monitors needed to be more fully developed. It appears from the applicants concern about the level of those teaching Early Childhood Education not having a Master's degree, that finding qualified monitors would demand an articulated plan. Not enough information was provided on how they will recruit, what position requirements for the position will be, and how many programs will be assigned to each monitor to make an informed decision as to the quality of this part of the State plan. The plan for formal monitoring appears to be planned to occur annually. A component included is coaching that appears to occur more frequently than the monitoring. This would assist more sites in moving to higher levels. The plan for informing parents of the quality of their program appeared of high quality. Centers would have their ratings posted and information about licensing compliance would be available to parents on the website where parents could view the licensing surveys. The plan includes developing marketing material and posting certificates with the rating visible to parents. Information on the new system and what it means will be posted by the certificate. The plan includes information posted at a website and allowing parents to submit comments. More information is needed on how this same information that allows parents to make quality decisions would be made available to parents of high needs children who do not have access to a website, who speak a second language or who cannot read. Quality and implementation appear to be high.

	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 Plan appears to be of high quality with partial implementation. level. The plan did appear to be one that was high quality in providing mentoring. The State plans to build on existing mentoring programs and reduce duplication of services by assigning one mentor to each early learning program. It appeared that this mentoring would occur more than once a year. The programs targeted for movement in 4 (B) (c) (2) to fit into the criteria of ambitious yet achievable. The plan provides for Tier 4 and 5 to move from 108 in 2012 to 238 in 2015 Children in the programs that are targeted for 100% of the programs being involved in the top tiers are High Needs. The plan implementation using a roll out of public funded programs and licensed programs, moving to include a broader community of early childhood learning programs. Identified were incentives for paying early learning programs by tying CCDF reimbursement rates to higher star levels as an incentive for progressing to higher levels in the TQRIS. The applicant did not indicate what incentives would be in place for early learning centers who did not receive CCDF funding. It was indicated that these would be identified at a local The State indicated that it had full

day kindergarten but not what supports, other than the health portion of the FOCUS TQRIS. the applicant did not indicate if they would be assisting parents by providing extended programs, transportation, support or meals for their early learning programs. Expansion of information was needed on what supports they have to build which would be provided as part of the State plan.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	16	12

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (B)(5)

The applicant's plan for providing validation for the effectiveness of their tiered system that will indicate if the tiers in the level will translate to improved outcomes for children in the programs appears reasonable but needs more detail. This is their third generation of TQRIS and with the information they gathered on the past two TQRIS implemented. The applicant should be able to specify what the validation plan will contain and how it will relate to improved child outcomes. In this case it appears that they will post an RFP and leave it up to the evaluators to decide the evaluation plan. The applicant indicates that they will include questions to determine if key dimensions do what they are proposed to do in assisting children to be ready for school but have not yet formed the questions. The applicant's proposal indicates that they plan to use a randomized validation and evaluation design when developed for establishing the validity of the TQRIS. The quality of this response is medium 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.	30	26

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 response to these criteria appears to be of high quality and substantially implemented which would assist the State in achieving their goal of high quality programs for high needs children. The State indicates that all stakeholders had input to address all areas including cultural. Expert consultants in early learning reviewed preschool and infant/toddler standards and gave input into the standards. Evidence was presented that the Early Learning Standards cover seven domains and are aligned with the State's K-3 standards. Crosswalks with Head Start and the National Core Standards were developed. Information throughout the plan indicates that these standards are the basis of curriculum, the comprehensive assessment for Pre-K and aligned to the future Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Professional development as outline in application revolves around the standards and the assessment tied to the standards. Supports are in place to provide assistance and understanding of the standards through quarterly training and onsite consultation. The application provided a timeline of activities tied to the Early Learning Standards which included translation to Spanish, developing the "Train the Consultant" training to support the understanding of the Early Childhood workforce of the standards. Missing from the application was if supports would be provided to all early learning programs or if the training would only be at target centers. The applicant was unclear about the consideration of cultural and linguistic appropriateness used when developing the early learning standards.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	23

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)

Some components that would impact the effective use of comprehensive assessment systems appear to be missing or not fully developed. The applicant indicated in the TQRIS and the narrative that several assessments will be available or required depending on the star level. This appears to indicate that selection of instruments may be limited or not available. Not all levels of programs would be required to implement a comprehensive assessment. Examples of comprehensive assessments to be used that were provided are the ERS, CLASS and PAS. The plan indicates that the CLASS will be used as a self-assessment for professional development and continuous improvement at some levels. More information on how the CLASS would be used for self-assessment, given the observational/recording requirements of this tool would clarify how this would contribute to a high quality plan and improving the outcomes for children in the programs. The QRIS requires that at least one teacher in each class have entry level training, proceeding to more in depth training in using the Comprehensive Assessment tied to the standards. Not including the entire workforce in this requirement is a weak area that would not provide at the program level for a clear vision of what a high quality program should contain. The plan's strength included consultants that would provide assistance on a bi-weekly basis to all programs using the assessments. More information was required of how many centers each consultant would work and the types of training that would be provided to judge the quality and implementation of their use. If the consultants to program numbers were adequate to provide quality professional development of the assessment tools, it would assure that assessment instruments are used appropriately and with some consistency across systems. The plan proposes to use the unique identifier in the Early Childhood database to decrease the chance of a child being reassessed using the same measure within a short time period. This database will be able to provide quick information on a child who is transitory and may be in several different programs within a year. The comprehensive assessments tied to Early Learning Standards uses a cycle of observe, document, report to inform instruction and planning. Visual representations are available for data analysis and increase intentionality of instruction. This is a medium quality response with partial implementation.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	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 quality and implementation for workforce knowledge and progression of credential is one of high quality and implementation. The state has a universal curriculum for early childhood teacher education which includes both community colleges and 4 year universities. Course outlines are developed and used consistently across the state. A career lattice exists which has multiple pathways to credentialing. The state used research which identified weaknesses in the professional development of the ECE workforce to develop lattice which would be responsive to the workforce. The lattice has the following levels: 45 Hour Entry Level; New Mexico Child Development Certificate in two areas of specialization: infant/toddler and preschool; 1 year vocational Certificate; Associates Degree; Bachelor's Degree Licensure Option; Bachelor's Degree Non-Licensure, Master's; Doctoral Degree. Legislation was passed which mandated all four year institutions accept students from two year programs if they hold an approved vocational transfer. The application appears to fully meet this criterion with a comprehensive plan to meet their worker's needs.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (D)(2)

The State plan is one already in place and appears to meet high quality and partial implementation except in the area of incentives for the workforce to progress to higher credentials. One hundred percent of the universities and eighty one percent of the community colleges are aligned with the states current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The time frame for alignment of all institution is two years. This appears to be a very attainable goal for the State. Child Care Services subsidizes the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program which provides support for the Early Childhood worker in becoming more educated in their practice and moving toward better outcomes for children. The above practice would appear to improve retention. In addition, the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children provides scholarships and compensation. The plan proposes to use the NewMexicoKids.org website to publically report aggregated data. The applicant mentioned using a telecommunication approach for providing course access in their more remote areas. While it would appear to address the need for remote areas to gain access to quality instruction, more information on what areas could access these services and how many it could reach would be useful in viewing the state workforce as a whole. New Mexico has an achievable goal in aligning the Workforce Competency Frame work, given the work already done in the past years. There does not appear to be clear career advancement in place that promotes early childhood staff to move in large numbers beyond a Type 1 credential. It is not required for staff or early childhood administration at the higher star levels of the TQRIS. While the plan addresses many components retention may be difficult in the programs with the most need if compensation of services does not match education. The numbers are very high for Credential 1, as currently 17,081 have this type of credential compared to credentialed 1-4 that top at 177. The plan would be more compelling if it addressed how to move the large number of the workforce with a Credential 1 to the next step of Credential 2.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (E)(1)

The state plan appears to meet most elements of the criteria for developing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The quality of the proposed plan is high. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool proposed is aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. Validity for this assessment has not yet been established and the State indicates that it will contract with an external entity to validate the use of the current Pre K tool with modifications to align with the kindergarten program. No mention was made of establishing reliability for the assessment. A phase in plan was described which started with piloting the assessment phase in of the assessment would begin in year two with full implementation by year four of the project. The data gathered from this tool will be housed in the Statewide Longitudinal Data system which can be accessed by teachers and administrators for data analysis to inform instruction for students at risk for school failure. The data system will provide a venue for parents to access validate the information. The State application indicate that the administration of the assessment will be funded through the Public Education Department which will provide sustainability of the assessment as well as meet the requirement that State or Federal resources other than the grant fund a significant portion of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The observation aspects of the tool with the

essential domains for school readiness appear to make it an assessment that meets the needs of New Mexico's population.

	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)
Information provided in the application seems to indicate that the State's three goals in this area support building on two existing systems located at the Public Education Department and Children, Youth and Families Department. The State plan includes a unique child identifier as well as a unique statewide early childhood educator identifier that would allow tracking of educator progress in the lattice system. A table was provided in the application that lists all the essential data elements that would be included. The plan provides for an interface that would allow all participating state agencies to access data and will meet criteria established in the application for facilitating the sharing of common data. The application indicates that the new enterprise system will generate information in a manner that will be easy for Early Learning and Developmental Programs to access. The State provides assurance that the early learning data system will meet all Data System Oversight requirements including Federal, State and local privacy regulations.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	228

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The plan, while not fully developed to include unregulated childcare is one that starts to meet the goal of including all children. The plan includes building trust while looking for incentives, that fit the needs of those providing unregulated childcare during year 1. The plan provides for a recruiter to go to the providers, getting information on their concerns and the use of bilingual staff. Given the fears that many unregulated childcare providers might have, this appears to be a reasonable plan to target this group of providers. A certificate program for these providers will occur during year 2. The applicant has indicated that all licensed/state regulated Early Learning Programs would be required to participate in the TQRIS as part of the licensing requirements for childcare. The plan is of high quality and partially implemented

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	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 addressed selection criterion (E) (1) and earned at least 70% of the points.		

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 met the Absolute Priority by developing a plan that contained key elements. The State demonstrated a history of support for Early Childhood which included legislation and practices that are in place that provide an alignment of services, programs and professional development. The State plan uses information to determine what communities in its state had the highest need and the capacity to provide improved outcomes. It also has a model in place to address those areas of the state that do not have capacity at this time to provide High Quality programs. Targets for improving the number of programs that are at Tier 4 or 5 are ambitious yet achievable with the public funded centers which have not been regulated up to this time but will be under this plan. A great workforce plan already is in place with alignment across the state with the higher institutes of learning. The state has looked at its unique population and developed a program that will improve the outcomes for New Mexico's youngest learners	