Stepping Up to the Challenge

Profiles of the 2011 Early Learning Challenge Grant Applications

January 24, 2012

Early Learning Challenge Collaborative

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State Profiles of the 2011 Early Learning Challenge Grant Applicants

The Early Learning Challenge

Congress showed bipartisan support for quality early childhood education when it directed a portion of Race to the Top funds to improve early learning programs for our nation's youngest children in the final FY11 appropriations agreement. The resulting Early Learning Challenge is a voluntary, competitive initiative that helps states build more efficient and effective early learning systems.

The Early Learning Challenge asked states to build essential infrastructure, including:

- Developing successful state systems, including governance models and sustainability strategies;
- High-quality, accountable programs, measured by tiered quality rating and improvement systems;
- Promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, reflected in standards articulating what children should know and be able to do and measured by comprehensive assessment systems;
- A great early childhood education workforce, guided by competency frameworks and supported by strategies to train and retain quality providers; and
- Measuring outcomes and progress, via tools like comprehensive data systems and kindergarten entry assessments.

The Challenge addresses the needs of the most vulnerable children through a comprehensive approach—it is not about program expansion, but about improving, linking, and aligning all of the programs, policies, and services focused on young children and their families. It aligns birth to five with K-12 and higher education to ensure that children receive seamless, high-quality educational experiences throughout their lives.

States' response to the challenge issued this fall exceeded expectations; they produced 37 applications, outlining over $2 billion of state demand for funding that far exceeded the $500 million allocated to the competition in round one. The Early Learning Challenge catalyzed innovative reform efforts across the geographic and political spectrum. Many non-selected states have embraced the vision of the Challenge and, resources permitting, would like to move forward with the plans they developed.

Trends and Highlights from State Applications

While the Collaborative, along with several partner organizations, is currently in the process of analyzing applications in greater depth, we see exciting and innovative work throughout our initial reading of the 37 applications submitted. We offer some preliminary highlights and look forward to sharing our in-depth analysis in the coming months.

The Early Learning Challenge embraces the use of quality rating and improvement systems, or QRIS, as a way to integrate all early learning programs under common definitions of quality and elevate the focus on programs that deliver best results for high-need children. A QRIS awards ratings to programs that meet a set of defined program standards while offering financial and other incentives and supports for programs to achieve higher levels of quality. Historically, many of these systems have focused narrowly on a certain slice of a state's overall early learning landscape and often only applied to child care programs. Prior to the Challenge, only a few

states, such as Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Vermont, had inclusive strategies to **expand and improve statewide quality rating and improvement systems** to work across provider types, helping parents easily understand which programs will be best for their children, setting clear expectations for programs, and improving outcomes for at-risk children by raising the quality of early learning programs.

Two patterns emerged in the Challenge applications to expand quality rating systems across all types of early learning programs:

- Requiring participation of all providers in the quality rating system, typically by linking participation to child care licensing, plus requiring participation in order to receive state pre-k or Head Start funds—a strategy planned by Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Washington.

- Keeping QRIS participation voluntary but making it a requirement in order to receive public funding, as planned by Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

States also welcomed the opportunity to learn from their peers and pool their expertise, with some applicants proposing to **work across state lines on collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for children.** These collaborations aim to develop new tools and approaches for the field, with their potential impact extending into all states.

- Delaware, Kentucky, and North Carolina will partner to develop, field test, and pilot a new quality rating scale tailored to meet the specific needs of their quality rating and improvement systems.

- Ohio will team up with Maryland to expand its already well-developed kindergarten entry assessment to include all domains of school readiness, using the new assessment to support children's development and academic achievement and give a holistic measure of their progress.

The application prompted states to work on fostering a great early childhood education workforce. Some states responded by **developing new degrees and credentials that focus on leadership development for early learning professionals**:

- Massachusetts will create an Early Educators Fellowship leadership institute for elementary school principals and community-based providers, supporting alignment between early learning programs and K-3 education.

- North Carolina will develop a new course to create a more coherent and standardized training for coaches and mentors across the state, as well as an online masters programs for early childhood program leadership development and management.

The Early Learning Challenge application focused states on an overarching goal of placing more high-need children into high-quality programs. States responded by **intensifying focus on the young children who need services most** in several ways, among them:

- Delaware will form "Readiness Teams" in target communities, anchoring them around low-performing elementary schools serving high concentrations of children with high needs. The teams will involve all key stakeholders that provide services across the birth-to-eight continuum within each local community.

- Maryland will create a "breakthrough" center for early childhood development that will promote successful programs in schools with high numbers of low-income students.

- Minnesota will direct significant investments toward four "target" communities with high needs, providing best practices that can then be implemented throughout the state.

- New Mexico plans to identify "Early Childhood Investment Zones" that have both high concentrations of at-risk children and low concentrations of high-quality early learning programs. These Zones will add community capacity for creating high-quality programs that integrate across systems, including health, education, and child care.

- North Carolina will implement a "Transformation Zone" made up of a set of rural communities with high needs, which will be eligible for focused programs designed to improve the lives of young children and families living within it.

About the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative

The Early Learning Challenge Collaborative is a partnership between BUILD, the leading early childhood systems building organization, and the First Five Years Fund, whose federal advocacy and education frame has strengthened the connection between early childhood and the K-12 community. The Collaborative, funded by private foundation dollars, is working with and supporting states as they plan, apply for, and implement the Early Learning Challenge grants. We also seek to promote state systems-building by shaping and informing state and federal policy on early childhood systems and are working to sustain the Early Learning Challenge and federal investments for young children and systems that support them.

About this Report

This report provides an overview of the hard work that states have already completed toward achieving the goals of the Early Learning Challenge, presenting snapshots of some of the most compelling aspects of their plans. As noted above, these are highlights selected by the Collaborative from an initial review of applications. In addition to conducting more analysis, we continue to gather input and feedback from states about which pieces of their plans they consider most important and, in non-selected states, which initiatives are still being undertaken.

The demographic, funding, program participation, and contact information listed in the state profiles is taken directly from each state's application and data tables. Note that for participation in early learning programs a grand total is not given because some children participate in multiple programs.

Highlights from Arizona's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Arizona's plan focuses on interconnected goals of increasing the number of children with high needs in quality settings, expanding the effective use of early learning standards and guidelines, increasing parental involvement, improving access to higher education and professional development opportunities for early learning professionals, developing and implementing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment and statewide data system, and increasing system integration and coordination at every level of governance.

- To increase the number of state- and federally-funded programs in Quality First, the state's quality rating system, Arizona would develop and implement a fast-track option for highly-rated programs, allowing the state to direct intensive coaching to improve lower-rated programs. To further direct resources to programs most in need of quality improvement, the state would monitor programs that receive one or two stars on its five-star rating scale annually and monitor programs receiving three to five stars once every two years. Arizona's plan calls for the state to cover the licensing fees for programs that choose to participate in Quality First.

- Arizona would leverage public-private partnerships to develop a network of regional technical assistance centers to improve workforce quality through ongoing professional development that is sensitive to the needs of the state's culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood workforce.

- The state plan would expand programs' abilities to effectively use early learning standards and guidelines by investing in a statewide coaching academy. The academy would aim to boost coaches' abilities to provide direct training and support to early learning providers who use the statewide standards.

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Arizona Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $759,007,202

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 608,679
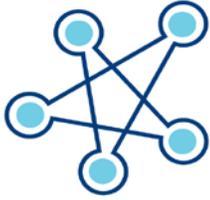
Children under age 6 who are low-income: 300,981

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 22,222

Child Care and Development Fund 30,375

State-funded preschool 1,852

Arizona ELC Contacts

Rhian Evans Allvin
CEO
First Things First
rallvin@azftf.gov

ARKANSAS

Highlights from Arkansas's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Arkansas would make its voluntary quality rating and improvement system mandatory, requiring all licensed child care providers to participate by 2014. To ensure greater efficiency by avoiding duplication of services, the state has a reciprocity agreement with Head Start and Early Head Start agencies to allow programs that are in good standing with federal review to qualify for a "level three" rating, with "level three" being the highest current rating, though the state plans to expand its rating scale in the future. Arkansas would require children who receive foster care vouchers to be enrolled in a three-star or higher program.

- To improve kindergarten readiness and create a smoother path for children to transition from early learning programs to the K-12 system, the state would create community hubs to link early learning providers with kindergarten teachers in regular meetings to identify common resources and engage with parents.

- The state would improve its professional development reporting system to track education attainment, staff turnover, and link with the progress of children as they enter kindergarten. Arkansas would use data from the reporting system to determine how staff turnover affects program ratings over time.

- Arkansas would develop a system to support more effective use of data by creating standardized reports for teachers and programs, providing training on the use of the reports, and creating joint training for early childhood and kindergarten educators to support transitions and program improvement.

Arkansas Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: 671,752,808

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 238,373

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 140,355

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 13,182

Child Care and Development Fund 26,558

State-funded preschool 21,342

Arkansas ELC Contacts

Tonya Russell
Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services
tonya.russell@arkansas.gov

Early Learning Challenge Collaborative: a partnership between BUILD and FIRST FIVE YEARS FUND

Highlights from California's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- California will work with 16 regional consortia comprised of local providers and other stakeholders, each of which will develop and put into effect high-quality local quality rating and improvement systems for early childhood programs. The consortia partners will use the state's early learning standards, curriculum frameworks, and child development assessments to distinguish levels of quality, identify priorities for improvement, and determine specific ways that each community will improve program quality.

- The 16 consortia, which encompass 1.8 million children—over 65 percent of the total number of children under age five living in California—will form learning communities and mentor peers in implementing quality rating and improvement systems.

- A public-private partnership will leverage grant funds with philanthropic dollars to establish professional development hubs in Los Angeles and Santa Clara counties. They will focus on training providers to meet high standards and include a particular focus on supporting dual language learners.

- California will offer additional provider training in assessing social-emotional learning and ensure greater access to developmental and behavioral screenings.

- Coursework at community colleges will be expanded to include offerings on infant and toddler development, children with special needs, and program administration.

- The state's kindergarten readiness assessment will include additional social-emotional developmental domains, and data on readiness will be linked to the K-12 data system.

California Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .. Up to $100 million

Round 1 Award: $52,572,935

Additional resources leveraged: $549,068

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 2,745,910

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 1,345,469

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start:............121,506

Child Care and Development Fund: 125,899

State-funded preschool:....101,414

California ELC Contacts

Camille Maben
Director
Child Development Division
cmaben@ede.ca.gov

Highlights from Colorado's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Colorado's plan calls for embedding its quality rating and improvement system for programs into state licensing and expanding the nationally-known "Results Matter Assessment System" to reach programs that serve children with high needs, with the goal of increased kindergarten readiness.

- A new governance structure would create an Office of Early Childhood within the Department of Human Services with a governor-appointed, public-private advisory board that would consolidate major funding streams that are currently administered across five different agencies and strengthen collaboration among other state agencies.

- Colorado is expanding its early learning guidelines to encompass birth through age eight. They will address all domains of development, be aligned with Common Core K-12 academic standards, inform quality rating program standards, and be used across the early childhood workforce.

- A new workforce knowledge and competency framework would incorporate "Educator Effectiveness Standards" aligned with those for K-12 teachers. The framework would be linked to a progression of credentials and degrees and would be actively used in recruiting, hiring, training, advancement, and retention decisions.

- The "Strengthening Families Framework" would be embedded across programs and systems to more actively engage and support families.

- Colorado would use a "shared services" model—centralizing certain common services to provide economies of scale and quality-enhancing supports—to programs that serve high needs communities, with the aim of stabilizing their business practices and supporting their infrastructure.

Colorado Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $120,263,631

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 435,000

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 174,000

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start 14,006

Child Care and Development Fund 25,964

State-funded preschool 19,486

Colorado ELC Contacts

Julie Krow
Director
Office of Children, Youth, and Families
julie.krow@state.co.us

Highlights from Connecticut's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Connecticut would achieve its goal of dramatically increasing the percentage of high-need children who enter kindergarten ready to succeed and cutting in half the percentage of children unprepared for school by focusing on key leverage points: consolidating, improving, and expanding the quality of publicly-funded early learning programs; improving the quality of the family, friend, and neighbor programs that serve more than half of the states high-need children; and accelerating improvements and coordination in reporting requirements, standards and assessments, and implementing a tiered quality rating and improvement system.

- The state proposes taking steps to embed health in its early childhood system by including health-related standards in its early learning standards and promoting health through its quality rating and improvement system. Connecticut proposes to hire a new statewide early childhood health coordinator and will include health as an area of focus for its early childhood cabinet and local councils.

- Connecticut would establish a "federated" data network to link early learning and development-related data systems to each other to improve data-sharing and aid data-driven decision making. The system would rely on a unique child ID that works across all systems.

- To complement Connecticut's application, Governor Malloy pledged to open one thousand new high-quality early childhood spaces for high-need children, create a new governance structure to help coordinate various systems involved in bringing services to those children, and strengthen current state early childhood health, nutrition, education, and development resources.

Connecticut Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $1,732,860,000

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 246,211

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 140,355

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 13,182

Child Care and Development Fund 13,807

State-funded preschool 8,913

Connecticut ELC Contacts

Charlene Russell-Tucker
Connecticut State Department of Education
charlene.russell-tucker@ct.gov

Highlights from Delaware's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Delaware's plan calls for dramatically increasing the percentage of programs serving high-need children that participate in its quality rating system from 20 to 78 percent, the percentage of children in the highest-rated programs from 5 to 58 percent, and the number of programs that are in the top tiers of quality from 27 to 62 percent.

- Through an expansion of an existing pilot program, clusters of programs serving high-need populations will receive intensive ongoing coaching and training. Communities of practice for program directors will meet monthly, and programs will receive weekly visits from trainers who will help them to improve classroom quality.

- Delaware will work in partnership with Kentucky and North Carolina to develop, field test, and pilot a new quality scale designed to meet the specific needs of quality rating systems.

- Training on Delaware's health and nutrition standards will expand and will include an online version of a toolkit that includes a self-assessment, nutrition rules, tools to plan healthy eating, feeding guidelines, family engagement guidance, and physical activity guidelines.

- To strengthen coordination and transition planning between early childhood and early elementary grades, Delaware will create "Readiness Teams" in target communities. Anchored around low-performing elementary schools serving high concentrations of children with high needs, these teams will involve all key stakeholders that provide services across the birth-to-eight continuum within each local community.

Delaware Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: $49,878,774

Additional resources leveraged: $10,107

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 70,055

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 28,022

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start:................2,209

Child Care and Development Fund 9,806

State-funded preschool........... 843

Delaware ELC Contacts

Alison Kepner
Public Information Officer
Secretary of Education Office
akepner@doe.de.us

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Highlights from District of Columbia's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- DC maintains a single vision that informs its plan: that all children in the District will enter kindergarten healthy and prepared to learn. To achieve this result, the plan focuses on three reform pilars: mapping, aligning, and carefully targeting human and fiscal resources; developing and facilitating standards-based professional development in critical areas; and developing a District-wide definition of quality that can apply to all programs in all settings.

- The District would enhance its existing quality rating and improvement system by opening it to all programs serving children birth to age five. DC would work with a QRIS study group to identify the top two District-wide technical assistance priorities each year and develop an array of materials like webinars, quick reference charts, and in-person trainings targeted at programs in lower levels of the system.

- DC proposes to align early learning standards to the Common Core state standards, and its plan includes high-quality professional development opportunities to assist providers in making effective use of the standards.

- Starting in FY13, the District would document funding across programs and funding streams in a single "Early Learning and Development System Budget" that would be used to inform a strategic financing plan and serve as a benchmark for tracking early learning investments and outcomes over time

- A kindergarten entry assessment would allow all teachers to identify the readiness of their students within the initial months of the school year.

District of Columbia Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $110,000

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 41,553

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 10,247

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 3,935

Child Care and Development Fund 9,073

State-funded preschool.........7,532

District of Columbia ELC Contacts

Hosanna Mahaley
State Superintendent
hosanna.mahaley@osse.dc.gov

Highlights from Florida's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Florida plans to further develop its existing early childhood data infrastructure and use data to tie quality ratings of early learning programs to child outcomes. Florida has been working toward a statewide quality rating system, with pilots in seven regions of the state and extensive investment in the quality rating and improvement system infrastructure over the last three years.

- Highly-rated providers would receive property tax waivers, and the state would provide marketing materials to help support programs.

- Florida would use Early Learning Challenge funds to develop a more robust professional development system for early childhood educators statewide. The state's plan calls for embedding core competencies for early care and education practitioners, building a strong quality assurance system to ensure the promotion of children's learning and development and evaluating Florida's professional development system for linkage to child outcomes. That professional development system also would support providers by offering online career advising and distance learning.

Florida Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .. Up to $100 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $16,548,974,059

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 1,264,706

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 645,000

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 42,493

Child Care and Development Fund 140,823

State-funded preschool 81,500

Florida ELC Contacts

Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner
Florida Department of Education
eric.smith@fldoe.org

Highlights from Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Georgia's plan proposes to build on, improve, and integrate "good" existing early learning components to create a "great" statewide system that supports increased access to high-quality programs and services for children with high needs. The state would track success by analyzing the impact of its policy changes on school readiness for high-need children.

- The state's plan calls for completely revising its current array of early learning standards into a single set of statewide Georgia Early Learning Standards for all children birth to age five. The state would align the early learning standards with state Common Core standards. Georgia would implement a roll-out plan for the revised standards that would include a partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting to host live-streaming professional development on implementing the standards.

- Using existing funds, Georgia plans to review, revise, and align their workforce knowledge and competency frameworks to align with the revised early learning standards. The state would use Challenge funds for an expert review of the new frameworks to help identify gaps in state-approved coursework for the early learning workforce.

- Georgia would design and implement a comprehensive web-based kindergarten entry assessment tool that would be used to inform individual student learning, collect aggregate data on school readiness, and evaluate the effectiveness of the state's Early Learning Challenge projects.

- Georgia would develop and fully implement a three-tiered quality rating and improvement system.

Georgia Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: .... $ 51,001,094

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 871,886

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 443,743

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 28,667

Child Care and Development Fund ..... 73,742 served annually

State-funded preschool.......48,964

Georgia ELC Contacts

Bobby Cagle
Commissioner
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
bobby.cagle@decal.ga.gov

Highlights from Hawaii's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Hawaii's plan builds on its State Advisory Council framework, which includes outcomes for a comprehensive, high-quality early learning system that serves all of Hawaii's children prenatal to age five. The state proposes a collaborative approach to strengthening its early learning system, beginning with the goal of establishing a Department of Early Childhood by 2015. In the meantime, a cabinet-level Early Childhood Coordinator position has already been established and filled by executive order.

- Hawaii would design and implement a quality rating and improvement system based on statewide standards, with a pilot program ready to roll out at the start of 2012. Over time, the system would expand to include license-exempt, home visiting, and family-child interaction programs. The state proposes a workgroup charged with creating appropriate standards for these sectors.

- Building on existing local initiatives, the state proposes to create community-based centers that would strengthen the early education workforce by focusing on recruitment, retention, and professional development opportunities with clearly-defined career paths.

- Hawaii would create a new comprehensive set of early learning and development standards and family engagement standards that would inform both program instruction and form a foundation for the state's new quality rating and improvement system. The new standards would encompass the major domains of child development and align with state Common Core standards.

Hawaii Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: .... $ 22,774,482

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 102,588

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 41,257

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 3,774

Child Care and Development Fund 12,129

State-funded preschool.............. 70

Hawaii ELC Contacts

Pankaj Bhanot
Deputy Director
Department of Human Services
pbhanot@dhs.hawaii.gov

Highlights from Illinois's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Illinois has structured its plan around three overarching strategic reform priorities: creating a unified framework for all early learning and development programs through deeper integration of preexisting state supports; connecting the most at-risk children with the supports and services they need; and significantly increasing the quality of early learning and development programs from "adequate to good and from good to great."

- The state would increase collaboration between its departments of education and human services with a joint budgeting process, data-sharing and cost-saving plans for coordinating procurement, contracting, performance evaluation, and information technology. Further integration would be spearheaded by a newly-created Early Learning Challenge Leadership Team, comprised of the State Superintendent, the secretary of Human Services, the director of Children and Family Services, and the director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office, which would meet monthly to oversee progress.

- Illinois would adopt revised existing statewide early learning and development standards and develop tools to integrate the improved standards into all early learning and development programs. The state would develop web-based supports to facilitate implementation and understanding of the standards and would also provide extensive training to providers on how to follow them. The revised standards would be incorporated into the career lattice and credentialing framework, ensuring that they are reflected in the professional development opportunities, certifications, and degrees available to early educators throughout the state.

Illinois Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $104,210,148

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 983,603

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 389,737

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 50,791

Child Care and Development Fund 118,416

State-funded preschool 80,101

Illinois ELC Contacts

Chris Koch
State Superintendent
Illinois State Board of Education
chris.koch@isbe.ne

IOWA

Highlights from Iowa's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Iowa plans to build on its current quality rating and improvement systems, increasing the number of programs participating and offering financial incentives in relation to the level of quality programs aim to achieve. Expanded use of assessments of environmental quality and formative assessment data will help track how programs and children are progressing.

- The state would move from its current assessment, which focuses solely on early literacy, to establish a common, comprehensive kindergarten entry assessment aligned with state early learning standards.

- Iowa would develop a comprehensive professional development system with clear targets for what teachers should know and do, clear career pathways, and milestones along each pathway to chart progress.

- Iowa would create an integrated data system to collect and report on children, programs, and the early learning workforce. It would compile existing data on screening measures, formative assessmetns, and measures of environmental quality.

- The state's plan outlined an expansion of an intensive coaching and training effort based on the CLASS observation of adult-child interaction. Evaluation of a two-year pilot initiative in select Head Start classrooms showed significant and sustained improvement on the quality of teaching practices and interactions.

Iowa Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not Selected

Additional resources leveraged: $6,459,407

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 232,292

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 97,168

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 9,301

Child Care and Development Fund 18,898

State-funded preschool.......24,116

Iowa ELC Contacts

Penny Milburn
Iowa Department of Education
Penny.Milburn@iowa.gov

Early Learning Challenge Profiles
KANSAS

Highlights from Kansas's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Kansas's plan focuses on early literacy, setting the goal that all young children in the state with high needs will enter kindergarten ready to learn and will read on grade level by fourth grade. Kansas would build on an existing early childhood system by working toward improved strategic, statewide coordination aimed at improving quality.

- The state would re-tool its current rating system, aligning several existing standards into one new, unified tiered quality rating system and developing a comprehensive assessment system for all programs within it.

- Kansas would align early learning guidelines and the state's existing kindergarten entry assessment with K-3 Common Core standards to promote smoother connections between early learning and K-12. The updated guidelines would link to a revamped professional development framework for both preservice and inservice training.

- Planned work toward developing a comprehensive early childhood data system would include conducting a gap analysis, providing supports to providers on data use, and linking the state's child care registry to its workforce registry.

Kansas Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: .... $ 8,173,000

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 231,385

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 97,182

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 11,910

Child Care and Development Fund 17,224

State-funded preschool.........9,463

Kansas ELC Contacts

Dr. Diane DeBacker
Commissioner
Kansas State Deptartment of Education
ddebacker@ksde.org

Highlights from Kentucky's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Kentucky would restructure its quality rating and improvement system to drive school readiness by increasing program participation and progressively offering financial reimbursements to programs as they move up the state's four-tiered system. Currently used mostly by child care programs, the system would expand to include pre-k and Head Start programs.

- The quality rating and improvement sytem would be linked to licensing, with the initial tier encompassing all licesed settings. The top tiers of the QRIS will become more rigorous, with added emphasis on degrees for teachers, family engagement, and using data to improve instruction.

- The state would create a centralized professional development center for providers targeted toward helping them move up to higher quality tiers. With grant funding, Kentucky would revise the financial incentives available to providers based on quality level and population served. New credentials for coaches and online trainers would help expand professional development offerings in rural areas and with family child care providers.

- A competitive "Early Childhood Program of Excellence" award would recognize programs that achieve child outcome measures, serve high-need populations, end employ innovative teaching strategies.

- The state will reach out to private sector funders, such as United Way, to encourage local funding partnerships and will develop toolkits on best practices in program integration and blended funding.

Kentucky Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $69,874,418

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 334,170

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 176,442

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and
Early Head Start 19,186

Child Care and Development Fund 71,528

State-funded preschool 23,342

Kentucky ELC Contacts

Terry S. Tolan
Executive Director
Office of Early Childhood
terry.tolan@ky.gov

Highlights from Maine's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- The state's existing quality rating and improvement system, which currently includes child care and Head Start programs, would be expanded to include public school pre-k, Title I, and early intervention. The revised system would include greater emphasis on curriculum, assessment, and using the CLASS measure of teacher-child interactions, and it would incorporate more family engagement and health measures.

- Maine proposes to establish a new interdepartmental sub-agency to unify early learning reforms undertaken by the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. The new agency would streamline decision-making and ensure interagency coordination.

- A progression of developmental guidelines will now span from birth to age eight and better articulate the scope and sequence of what children should know and be able to do. They will be cross-referenced to the Common Core and other K-12 standards. With grant funding, these standards would be woven into Maine's workforce competencies and higher education standards in both two- and four-year degree programs throughout the state.

- Maine's plan places particular emphasis on meeting the needs of specific populations of the state's young children: those with disabilities, English language learners in urban areas, and high-need children in more difficult-to-reach rural areas.

- The proposal also includes plans to build out and link the state early childhood data system to the larger state longitudinal data system so that educators and the public can better know which early learning programs and practices produce the best outcomes for children.

Maine Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $5,316,892

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 85,333

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 38,400

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start 4,638

Child Care and Development Fund 2,024

State-funded preschool 2,127

Maine ELC Contacts

Jaci Holmes
Federal Liaison
Jaci.holmes@maine.gov

Highlights from Maryland's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- The Early Learning Challenge prompted Maryland to set a long-term goal of increasing the percentage of children assessed as "fully ready" to enter kindergarten from the 2010 baseline of 81 percent to 92 percent in 2015.

- Maryland will create a "breakthrough" center for early childhood development that will promote successful programs in schools with high numbers of low-income students.

- Maryland plans to create a local infrastructure of 24 local early childhood councils to carry out the state's early childhood agenda. This innovation would be guided by a public-private partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which would provide leadership training and facilitation. Maryland also plans to develop "Family Engagement Coalitions." The Coalitions will work within the larger state network of early education partners to assure healthy families with access to effective resources and support the leadership role families play in the early childhood system.

- The Challenge prompted Maryland to establish early learning academies for teachers working in pre-k through the second grade.

- To keep children on-track, Maryland plans to conduct its assessment of kindergarteners in seven learning areas twice a year, instead of just once in the fall, beginning in 2014-2015. To measure success, Maryland will track data and progress of the state's early childhood programs

Maryland Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: $49,999,143

Additional resources leveraged: $115,363,244

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 364,488

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 103,802

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early head Start 12,676

Child Care and Development Fund 21,293

State-funded preschool 27,071

Maryland ELC Contacts

Nancy Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools
ngrasmick@msde.state.md.us

Rolf Grafwallner
Asstitant State Superintendent Division of Early Childhood Development
Maryland State Department of Education
rgrafwal@msde.state.md.us

Highlights from Massachusetts's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Massachusetts will work to improve quality in all early childhood programs by securing universal participation in the state quality rating and improvement system. Funds will be directed toward program supports, online professional development training, and technical assistance for programs so that they can meet higher benchmarks of quality.

- The state will work to ensure that its early learning and development standards are aligned to school readiness domains and K-12 standards, evaluating them for cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Massachusetts will also develop standards for English language development.

- Efforts to align early learning with K-3 will extend into other key systems elements, including classroom practices, professional development, child transitions, and assessment data.

- Massachusetts will scale up a statewide assessment system from birth to third grade and develop a kindergarten entry assessment to be piloted in its first year of the grant.

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate supports for families will be provided via 107 grants for Coordinated Family and Community Engagement awarded to high need communities. Partnerships with public television stations and United Way affiliates will help build public awareness about the importance of quality early learning and school readiness.

- A cadre of 90 coaches will provide programs and teachers with customized development plans. An Early Educators Fellowship will serve as a leadership institute for elementary school principals and community-based providers, supporting alignment between early learning programs and K-3 education. Six regional "Readiness Centers" will be expanded and provide linked pre-k and K-12 professional development, including training in the kindergarten entry assessment and in analyzing data.

Massachusetts Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: ....$50 million

Additional resources leveraged: $545,811,807

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 442,529

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 134,703

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 16,540

Child Care and Development Fund 33,929

State-funded preschool.......14,221

Massachusetts ELC Contacts

Sherri Killins
Commissioner
Department of Early Education and Care
sherri.killins@state.ma.us

Carrie Conway
Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
MA Dept of Elementary & Secondary Education
cconway@doe.mass.edu

MICHIGAN

Highlights from Michigan's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- The Office of Great Start was created within the Department of Education and tasked with aligning all of the state's early learning programs to achieve a single set of shared outcomes for school readiness and success.

- Michigan's plan includes a child care scholarship pilot project that would leverage existing federal child care funds with Challenge money to give expanded access to consistent and stable full-day, full-year care for 780 infants and toddlers and 550 preschool-age children.

- A pilot program of "Parent Cafés" would field test strategies for promoting and sustaining family support and engagement statewide. Information from the pilot would be used to design professional development on family engagement and support.

- Michigan accelerated statewide implementation of its new quality rating and improvement system, Great Start to Quality. Among the planned supports for improving program quality is access to the Growth Fund, a grant program and series of workshops for program directors at level three or higher and serving children with high needs. Funds would help programs develop a business plan and access on-site expertise for infrastructure changes, continued planning, and support.

- Michigan outlined the architecture for its next-generation early learning longitudinal data system, developing plans to integrate data from early care and education, health, mental health, nutrition, early interventions, and family support.

- A new kindergarten entry assessment, the Michigan Model for School Readiness, will use a customized version of the Work Sampling System to provide accountability for investments and improve instructional support.

Michigan Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $166,499,357

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 742,424

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 372,799

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head start 41,944

Child Care and Development Fund 61,784

State-funded preschool 28,904

Michigan ELC Contacts

Sally Vaughn
Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer
Michigan Department of Education
vaughns1@michigan.org

Highlights from Minnesota's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Minnesota's plan focuses on expanding access for children with high needs to quality services and establishing an effective governance and accountability structure. Challenge funds will support statewide implementation of its quality rating system, which is currently in the pilot stage.

- Significant investments will be directed toward four "target communities" with high needs—White Earth, Itasca County, Saint Paul's Promise Neighborhood and Minneapolis's Northside Achievement Zone—providing best practices that can then be implemented in communities throughout the state.

- Minnesota will provide incentives for districts to invest Title I education dollars in high-quality early learning programs, using grant funds to provide matching dollars in target communities.

- The state's existing birth-to-five child development standards will be aligned with K-12 standards, which will be expanded to include non-academic developmental domains for children ages five to 12. An evaluation and review cycle to ensure the standards remain research-based and aligned to K-12.

- Increased data capacity will provide "personalized learning plans" via web tools to help providers use assessment data to guide instruction, and an "early warning and response system" to trigger referrals and interventions for at-risk children.

- In addition to strengthening connections with higher education institutions, Minnesota will expand access to free- and low-cost training and revamp its scholarship program for providers.

- The existing kindergarten entry assessment will be revised and linked to the state's longitudinal data system, helping school districts make decisions about how best to allocate funding and identify staff development needs.

Minnesota Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: $44,858,313

Additional resources leveraged: $60,232,811

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 426,805

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 142,553

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 14,096

Child Care and Development Fund 21,175

State-funded preschool 23,317

Minnesota ELC Contacts

Brenda Casselius
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education
brenda.casselius@state.mn.us

MISSISSIPPI

Highlights from Mississippi's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Mississippi's application included plans to launch "pockets of innovation" throughout the state which would form the building blocks of a comprehensive, collaborative state system. The state's plan outlined strategies to increase the number of high needs children being served statewide by 61 percent.

- A new Division of Early Childhood Care and Development created within the Department of Human Services will coordinate policy across the state. A new liaison structure will link the division to other agencies and statewide organizations that serve children and families.

- New early learing guidelines would form the basis of the state's quality rating and improvement system, which would encompass licensed centers, in-home child care providers, and school-based pre-kindergarten programs.

- The state would create college savings accounts for income-eligible families who enroll children in high-quality early childhood education programs, with families receiving an initial $100 upon enrollment in a program receiving at least a two-star rating in their quality rating and improvement system.

- A partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center would connect difficult-to-reach rural populations of high-need children with basic health and screening services through telecommunications points, a small traveling team of health experts and a teaching program to improve the screening skills of rural pediatric offices.

Mississippi Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: .... Not specified

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 255,781

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 91,886

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 29,531

Child Care and Development Fund 13,120

State-funded preschool.........3,254

Mississippi ELC Contacts

Don Thompson
Executive Director
Department of Human Services
don.thompson@mdhs.gov

Annjo Lemons
Executive Director
Early Childhood Advisory Council
alemons@governor.state.ms.us

MISSOURI

Highlights from Missouri's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- An expanded quality rating system, "Show Me Quality for Kids," would encompass more types of programs, including family, friend, and neighbor care, and would be tied to the state's licensing system. Lower scoring programs would have access to coaching to help them improve their quality ratings. Additional training would also be available to providers serving English language learners, children of incarcerated parents, and children with disabilities.

- The plan creates community pilots in areas that would receive more intensive focus, including emphasis on "braiding" funding to serve more children with high needs and on collaborative cross-program professional development. Applicant communities would be asked to propse pilot innovations that could inform statewide best practices and policies.

- With grant funds, a program that provides on-site coaching to informal providers would be expanded statewide.

- A partnership with the state's Head Start training and technical assistance team and the Missouri Head Start Association would provide child care programs with ongoing training opportunities throughout the year on healthy eating, nutrition, and physical activity.

- New technology solutions would help bolster the state's early learning data system and provide real-time information about child assessments and provider professional development.

Missouri Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources
leveraged: $1,572,139,588

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 442,722

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 220,033

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and
Early Head Start 22,203

Child Care and Development
Fund 23,331

State-funded preschool......... 2,080

Missouri ELC Contacts

Robin Coffman
Chief of Staff
Department of Elementary &
Secondary Education
robin.coffman@dese.mo.gov

NEBRASKA

Highlights from Nebraska's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Nebraska's plan builds on a foundation of state commitment to quality early learning by aligning and coordinating early learning and development at the state leadership level.

- Nebraska would implement a common, statewide tiered quality rating and improvement system. Programs that serve children with high needs would receive targeted supports, and the state would recognize "Early Learning Nebraska Communities" that have a strong commitment to improving access to high quality child care in their communities as evidenced by the number of programs in the top tiers of the rating system.

- To connect families with key supportive services, Nebraska plans to embed health and community resource consultants in targeted high-need communities. This network of health professionals will be intergated into the full range of training offered providers.

- Nebraska included plans to develop family engagement standards that would be woven into quality rating system and to offer providers training on the new standards via two-day institute on family-centered coaching strategies and monthly consultation on the coaching model.

- The University of Nebraska's Buffett Early Childhood Institute will spearhead efforts to forge stronger relationships with higher education programs that prepare early childhood teachers, including aligning course work with the state's core competency framework and converting classes to distance learning formats.

Nebraska Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $947,955,279

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 151,978

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 66,870

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 6,636

Child Care and Development Fund 22,643

State-funded preschool.........6,550

Nebraska ELC Contacts

Joann Schaefer
Chief Medical Officer
State of Nebraska
joann.schaefer@nebraska.gov

Highlights from Nevada's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Nevada would push for statewide adoption of its "Silver State Stars" quality rating and improvement system and publicize ratings for parents and the public. The expanded system would incorporate additional measures of teacher-child interactions, nutrition and health practices, social-emotional competency, and staff qualifications. Coaches would work with programs to help them move to higher quality levels.

- Nevada's parent engagement strategy centers on the use of the Strengthening Families model, which will be incorporated into program standards and used to support children's socio-emotional development in programs and at home. Providers will be trained on the "Five Protective Factors" survey that will serve as the basis for developing shared strategies for engaging families. This approach is supported by legislation passed in the 2011 session to create an Office of Parental Involvement and Family engagement within the Department of Education.

- The state's plan would build relationships between higher education programs and informal training providers so that teachers and caregivers have access to a progression of credentials and degrees. Joint training between early learning providers and K-3 teachers and principals would focus on providing supports for high-need children.

- A coordinated data system would capture and systematize the information currently collected by different child assessment tools, with the goal of streamlining measures and developing relevant trainings and coursework for providers.

Nevada Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $15,598,010

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 237,979

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 102,331

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start.................4,711

Child Care and Development Fund...................................5,830

State-funded preschool.........1,334

Nevada ELC Contacts

Margot Chappel
Director
Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems
mchappel@dhhs.nv.gov

NEW JERSEY

Highlights from New Jersey's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Grow NJ, New Jersey's quality rating and improvement system, currently in the pilot stage, would be expanded to ultimately reach 75,000 low-income children. The expansion would offer data and support to existing programs to help them constantly improve—building on a successful model of quality improvement carried out by the State Preschool Program and the pilot. Grow NJ will also serve as a "consumer report" for parents.

- The expanded Grow NJ system would be used by center-based providers, family child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and school district preschool programs for typically developing children as well as those for children with disabilities and delays. Programs would be rated on six criteria: program and learning environment, family engagement, health and safety, professional development, personnel, and business practices.

- The New Jersey plan proposes creating county-based teams of trainers and technical assistance providers. Each team would have a family engagement coordinator to ensure families are linked to community supports and participate in county-based decision-making about early childhood resources. Learning coaches would provide training on learning standards and assessment, while disabilities and health service coordinators would provide information about screening for health and development issues.

- The state aims to launch the "New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning," a new data system that would link existing data on early learning programs and child outcomes and improve the state's ability to monitor progress and answer questions in a timely and relevant fashion.

New Jersey Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $6,124,569

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 592,383

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 171,791

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start 16,654

Child Care and Development Fund 21,755

State-funded preschool 51,333

New Jersey ELC Contacts

Christopher Cerf
Acting Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Education
chris.cerf@doe.state.nj.us

NEW MEXICO

Highlights from New Mexico's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- New Mexico has a long-standing quality rating and improvement system. The state's plan would implement FOCUS, a revised QRIS, that builds on current strengths and make improvements based on lessons learned. New Mexico would promote higher-quality programs, greater family engagement, stronger educator qualifications, and informative child assessments.

- All New Mexico public schools would use a kindergarten readiness assessment to provide teachers with critical information about children's progress and policymakers with critical information about program quality.

- The state would create a unified early learning data system and identify "Early Childhood Investment Zones" that have both high concentrations of at-risk children and low concentration of high quality early learning programs. These Zones would add capacity in the communities for creating high-quality programs that integrate across systems, including health, education, and child care.

- In the professional development system, New Mexico will bring together child care providers, pre-k , Head Start programs, early intervention, special education, infant mental health, and kindergarten for joint and aligned trainings.

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New Mexico Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $1,400,000

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 180,258

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 96,986

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 10,385

Child Care and Development Fund 14,404

State-funded preschool.........4,435

New Mexico ELC Contacts

Dr. Veronica Garcia
Cabinent Secretary
Public Education
veronica.garcia1@state.nm.us

Highlights from New York's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Last year, New York piloted a quality rating and improvement system in 13 communities. Working in partnership with the state Department of Education, the pilot involved all sectors of the early childhood community and paid careful attention to engaging school-based programs. The plan outlines how they scale up implementation of the system, starting with 480 schools in targeted high-need communities.

- All programs participating in the quality rating and improvement system would have access to a range of financial incentives, including improvement grants, quality awards, and service incentive awards. Programs at star levels four or five would be eligible for additional incentives if 25 percent or more of the children they serve are supported by child care subsidies.

- New York would create a statewide kindergarten readiness tool that would provide information on children's strengths and weaknesses and would be used to inform teachers' instruction and encourage greater parent involvement.

- The state outlined a plan to align its early childhood data system with the Education Department's P-20 longitudinal data system, linking unique student identifiers to information on the quality of the programs they attended and the credentials of the early childhood staff who provided services.

- New York's plans fo improving its early childhood workforce included articulating a set of competencies, creating a workforce registry, establishing a new regional professional development delivery model, and aligning training and preparation programs with the state's early learning standards.

New York Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .. Up to $100 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $17,623,134

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 1,459,317

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 593,942

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 64,888

Child Care and Development Fund 75,416

State-funded preschool....... 85,094

New York ELC Contacts

Katie Campos
Assistant Secretary for Education
katie.campos@exec.ny.gov

David Wakelyn
Deputy Secretary for Education
david.wakelyn@exec.ny.gov

Highlights from North Carolina's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- North Carolina's goals for the grant period include serving 75 percent of high-need children birth to age five in early learning programs that are rated four stars or higher in the state's five-star quality rating and improvement system.

- North Carolina will develop a more cohesive set of standards for children from birth to age eight, working in collaboration with K-12 leaders to ensure that early learning and school readiness standards align with K-3 standards.

- The state will revise the highest tiers of its quality rating system, raising the bar for programs to reach four- and five-star levels. It will also work with other states to develop a new, easier-to-implement environmental rating scale for the QRIS.

- The health and developmental screening system will expand to cover all children. A new regional coaching model will be created for health consultants who will promote medical homes and health literacy.

- North Carolina plans to invest in raising the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators and leaders in part by establishing learning communities to improve practice and collaboration. The state plans to expand access to coaches, expand course offerings, and increase completion rates in community college training programs.

- Parent skills and confidence will be supported by a new public awareness campaign to boost their knowledge and support them in selecting high-quality early childhood programs.

- A "Transformation Zone" made up of a set of rural communities with high needs in northeastern North Carolina will be eligible for focused programs designed to improve the lives of young children and families.

North Carolina Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: $69,991,121

Additional resources leveraged: $1,319,900

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 757,646

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 373,968

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 24,291

Child Care and Development Fund 144,279

State-funded preschool....... 24,645

North Carolina ELC Contacts

Anne Bryan
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of the Governor
abryan@nc.rr.coms

OHIO

Highlights from Ohio's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Ohio plans to increase access to high-quality services to 37,000 high-need children by updating its standards and expanding its quality rating and improvement system to additional provider types. Ohio also set a goal of expanding the number of its high-rated early learning settings by 1,300. Ohio will test incentives for rated programs to increase quality and participating in the rating system. as well as pilot financial incentives to move more high-need children into existing highly-rated programs. In addition, Ohio will pilot incentives for families to encourage the use of high quality programs.

- Partnering with Maryland, Ohio plans to expand its already well-developed kindergarten entry assessment to include all domains of school readiness (language and literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, socio-emotional, physical well-being, and approaches to learning). The assessments will be used to support children's development and academic achievement and measure the progress of children in all domains of school readiness. Ohio plans to include kindergarten entry assessment results on local school report cards as well as information for consumers on child outcomes.

- Ohio ranked highest among all states on the Early Learning Challenge competition in the "assessment system" section, scoring 89 percent; the next highest state score on the assessment system section was Minnesota, at 80 percent.

- A new, cabinet-level position – Early Education and Development Officer – was created in the governor's office to better ensure seamless alignment early education and development policies across state agencies birth to kindergarten entry.

Ohio Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility ... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: ....$69.9 million

Additional resources leveraged: ....$96.8 million

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 720,856

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 338,800

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 39,383

Child Care and Development Fund 62,920

State-funded preschool.........5,700

Ohio ELC Contacts

Stephanie Siddens
Ohio Department of Education
stephanie.siddens@ode.state.oh.us

Alicia Leatherman
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
alicia.leatherman@jfs.ohio.gov

Highlights from Oklahoma's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Oklahoma's revised quality rating and improvement system sets higher expectations and extends to additional types of early learning programs, including school-based pre-k, Head Start and Early Head Start, and birth-to-five programs funded by Title I. New program quality standards will be linked to early learning guidelines, a comprehensive assessment system, revised director and staff qualification benchmarks, and a new family engagement sub-scale that rewards programs for having a home visitor or family support worker on-site.

- Existing funding from a range of funding streams would be tapped to provide proposed supports and incentives, including bonuses, for programs participating in the new quality rating and improvement system.

- Oklahoma proposes to conduct a study of best practices in Head Start, child care, and pre-k collaboration, with the aim of developing tools and recommendations that could help communities better align and coordinate funding and other resources and providing grants to incent collaboration.

- Additional workforce information reporting would be required, enabling the state to report on the credentialing levels, advancement, retention, training, and demographics of its workforce.

- The ELC investment would help create a data system to track student performance in pre-k and better inform teachers of where students are when they enter kindergarten. The application also seeks support for a kindergarten entry assessment that would tell teachers where students need the most support upon entering kindergarten.

Oklahoma Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: 407,079,399

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 311,309

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 164,994

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 20,649

Child Care and Development Fund 47,739

State-funded preschool 17,542

Oklahoma ELC Contacts

Janet Barresi
Superintendent
State Deparment of Education
jcb@sde.ok.gov

Highlights from Oregon's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Oregon's plan aims to create a five-tiered quality rating and improvement system and to ensure that all early learning and development programs would participate, including child care, pre-k, state-funded Head Start, early intervention and special education. The five-tiered rating system would help families make decisions about care and education for their children and would help direct the state's investments over the long-term.

- Oregon's plan aligns statewide early learning and development standards to promote school readiness and to ensure a seamless transition to public schools, expands scholarships and training to further support early education professionals as they increase their skills and education level and offers incentives to increase the number of high-quality educators, especially in Oregon's low-income and rural areas.

- To identify whether children are prepared for school, Oregon would adopt a universal statewide kindergarten readiness assessment. Building on preliminary work already undertaken by stakeholders to refine their goals for the assessment, the state's plan outlines goals for choosing and instrument and piloting it to assure it measures all developmental domains.

- Oregon's plans for improving child health outcomes included expanded home visiting services, increased outreach to pediatricians and primary care providers, and added emphasis on healthy eating and physical activity standards in the quality rating system.

Oregon Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $1,127,360,031

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 237,556

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 122,757

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 10,230

Child Care and Development Fund 816

State-funded preschool......... 7,290

Oregon ELC Contacts

Duke Shepard
Policy Advisor
duke.shepard@state.or.us

PENNSYLVANIA

Highlights from Pennsylvania's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- With funding from the Early Learning Challenge, Pennsylvania would establish a birth-to-eight continuum for learning standards, career development, and outcome tracking.

- The state would define what it means to be kindergarten-ready, identifying which specific cognitive, social-emotional, and physical skills and abilities children must possess to succeed in the K-12 system. A new observation tool would be piloted and validated, with the eventual goal of providing reports on outcomes to parents, teachers, and programs.

- Pennsylvania aims to increase the number of high-quality programs serving high-need children and the number of children enrolled in top tier programs by 25 percent, in part by expanding the existing quality rating and improvement system (Keystone STARS) to include pre-k providers, early intervention services, school-based kindergarten programs, and licensed nursery schools. Programs in high-need communities would recive intensive training and professional development to help them move to higher tiers of quality.

- Pennsylvania's plan also includes a targeted family engagement project that would coordinate family supports and create local partnerships, as well as a partnership with the Pennsylvania Academy of Pediatrics to help primary care providers conduct childhood developmental screenings.

- Pennsylvania would enhance its data system to provide accessible, user-friendly information for parents, drive classroom instruction, improve quality, and inform state policy. Raw data would be converted into timely and actionable information that promotes kindergarten readiness and positive outcomes. The information would be written for and provided to parents, teachers, community leaders, and policymakers.

Pennsylvania Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $70 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $40,935,715

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 871,990

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 348,796

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 32,982

Child Care and Development Fund 169,064

State-funded preschool 11,359

Pennsylvania ELC Contacts

Barb Minzenberg
Deputy Secretary
Office of Child Development and Early Learning
bminzenber@pa.gov

Highlights from Puerto Rico's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Building on a recent program piloted with 100 providers, Puerto Rico would create a statewide quality rating improvement system. The pilot incorporated a range of different early childhood program settings, including child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, kindergarten classrooms, and private child care centers. Participating programs would receive ongoing mentoring, and a public awareness campaign would help parents identify quality settings.

- Puerto Rico proposes Project TAP: Developing Early Learning Environment, a program that would use mentors to assess the island's significant number of family and informal providers and provide them with individual action plans that would help them to incorporate Puerto Rico's early learning standards into their daily activities.

- Puerto Rico would use Challenge funds to develop a common, island-wide assessment and evaluation system linked to child outcomes and school readiness with data from early learning standards, the quality rating and iprovement system, and characteristics of the early childhood education workforce.

- Proposed efforts to improve the quality of the early childhood workforce include developing a framework of professional standards and competencies as well as improving the quality of the data collected on workforce demographics and development trajectories.

Puerto Rico Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: .... Not specified

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 279,680

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 229,377

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 37,169

Child Care and Development Fund 19,806

State-funded preschool.........1,147

Puerto Rico ELC Contacts

Marta Sobrino-Bolen
Executive Director
Early Childhood State Advisory Council
msobrino@foraleza.gobierno.pr

Highlights from Rhode Island's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Rhode Island's proposal includes plans to include all publicly-funded early learning programs into the Bright Stars quality rating and improvement system, expanding the existing voluntary system into one that includes all licensed providers.

- Programs serving children with high needs will be eligible for two-year program improvement contracts providing needed supports to move up quality levels. Additional training resources will also be available to centers serving infants and toddlers, centers and schools serving preschoolers, and family child care providers.

- Rhode Island will update its early learning standards for preschoolers and develop new ones for infants and toddlers. These standards will be used to improve programs and teaching practice, and they will be aligned with K-3 Common Core standards in math and literacy.

- Community-based efforts to reach children and families not currently enrolled in early learning programs will engage primary healthcare providers in interventions around early literacy, socio-emotional development, and family engagement.

- Rhode Island's proposed early learning data system will be linked to both the state's K-12 data system and to the state's universal newborn screening and health data system, helping to identify children with high needs, track participation in programs, and track children's development and learning.

- A new core competency framework will outline essential knowledge and practices for providers and will be aligned to a progression of professional development and credentials.

- Rhode Island will develop, pilot, and implement a kindergarten entry assessment by 2015.

Rhode Island Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: ....$50 million

Additional resources leveraged: $104,262,681

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 69,387

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 26,714

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start..........3,793

Child Care and Development Fund 8,484

State-funded preschool............ 81

Rhode Island ELC Contacts

Deborah Gist
Commissioner
Department of Education
deborah.gist@ride.ri.gov

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Executive Director
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
EBurkeBryant@rikidscount.org

VERMONT

Highlights from Vermont's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Vermont's plan includes revised early learning standards that would span from birth through kindergarten entry and align with K-3 standards, the Common Core, and the Head Start framework. A "train the trainer" network would help disseminate the standards to providers, and updated materials would engage and inform parents about them. Joint trainings with K-3 teachers would provide "vertically aligned" professional development.

- The state proposes requiring that all early learning and development programs implement the CLASS assessment of teacher-child interactions. Programs would be supported by trainers with particular expertise in the assessment instrument.

- To support child health and mental health, Vermont would hire additional staff focused on the inclusion of high-need children in early learning programs and on providing family support services. The state would also implement the Nurse Family Partnership home visiting model and train nurses in home health agencies on the approach.

- Vermont's proposed workforce initiatives include expanding apprenticeship and mentoring programs, enhancing community college course offerings, and linking and coordinating professional development across multiple components of the early childhood system.

- Governor Peter Shumlin has announced that he will reinvest savings from Department of Correction reforms into the early learning and development system. The state proposes to use those resources to sustain the achievements of its proposed Early Learning Challenge plan.

Vermont Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $75,000

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 39,140

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 14,756

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head start 1,916

Child Care and Development Fund 6,071

State-funded preschool.........3,476

Vermont ELC Contacts

Reeva Sullivan Murphy
Deputy Commissioner, VT Dept. for Children and Families
Reeva.murphy@state.vt.us

Highlights from Washington's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- A portion of Washington's Early Learning Challenge award will be invested in expanding its existing quality rating and improvement system to include Head Start, Early Head Start, and state-funded pre-k programs.

- Washington will develop new standards for what children should know and be able to do that are consistent across programs and aligned with K-3 standards. Family engagement, public awareness, and community outreach strategies will help ensure the guidelines are used and understood and that all providers are working toward common school readiness outcomes.

- The school readiness program, called WAKids, is scheduled to go statewide by the 2014 school year, and a keystone of the program is the development of an individual learning plan for each child via a discussion with the child's preschool teacher and his or her future kindergarten teacher. The kindergarten readiness assessment process is designed to inform both the K-12 system and the early learning system so that they use data to guide their investments and improve outcomes.

- Washington will adopt a set of core competencies for providers that define what they need to know and be able to do in order to provide high-quality care and are linked to education benchmarks, course and training offerings, and the state's professional development registry.

- Significant investments in coaching and mentoring will provide direct supports to providers to help them improve their practice. Training hubs and learning communities will target training resources and help with follow-up application of training principles.

Washington Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: ....$60 million

Additional resources leveraged: $2,516,466,439

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 483,730

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 193,492

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start........20,528

Child Care and Development Fund 65,425

State-funded preschool.........8,024

Washington ELC Contacts

Bette Hyde
Director
Department of Early Learning
bette.hyde@del.wa.gov

Judy Hartmann
Education Policy Advisor
Office of the Governor
judy.hartmann@gov.wa.gov

WEST VIRGINIA

Highlights from West Virginia's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- Building on a system that includes a well-established state pre-k program, West Virginia's proposal focuses on linking and aligning pre-k with programs serving infants and toddlers and on promoting awareness and use of the state's early learning and development standards.

- The early learning standards would be dissimanted in user-friendly formats, like a "Ready, Set, Go!" handbook for families and training modules and tools for educators.

- West Virginia would increase collaboration between early childhood programs and health providers, with the aim of ensuring that high needs children receive well-child visits and are screened and referred to appropriate services. Expanded training offerings would include health, nutrition, physical fitness, and socio-emotional health.

- As proposed, a revamped training and credentialing system for educators would become more seamless and aligned, with new partnerships with higher education institutions. The existing core knowledge and competency framework would be expanded to early childhood professionals beyond its current focus on child care providers, and it would also have new competencies for trainers and technical assistance providers.

- West Virginia would fully implement a kindergarten entry assessment in all school districts by the 2014-15 school year. The state would produce individualized reports for families and publish an annual report on the status of children as they enter kindergarten, with data provided for each of the state's 55 school districts as well as at the state level.

West Virginia Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $50 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $10,547,252

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 105,975

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 55,743

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early head Start 8,940

Child Care and Development Fund 13,029

State-funded preschool 8,536

West Virginia ELC Contacts

Kay Goodwin
Secretary of Education and the Arts
kay.h.goodwin@wv.gov

Highlights from Wisconsin's Early Learning Challenge Plan

- The plan calls for increasing the number of programs that participate in or are aligned with the highest tiers of Wisconsin's YoungStar quality rating and program improvement system. The number of three-star programs would increase from 32 to 2,000, four-star rated programs would move from 47 to 275, and five-star rated programs from 182 to 500. Under YoungStar, early chidhood teaching would improve through more intensive coaching and mentoring.

- Over four years, Wisconsin would effectively double the number of credentialed early childhood educators from aligned post-secondary institutions and professional development providers – from the current 1,826 to 3,590. The number of certification programs would expand from 49 to 53, and degree programs would expand from 33 to 37.

- Wisconsin would establish a new Office of Early Learning within its Department of Public Instruction in order to coordinate its reform plan across state agencies.

- Grant funds also would be used to accelerate system-building in other key areas:

  - Increasing the number of children in high quality programs through more robust parent outreach and greater child access in high-need areas.

  - Enhancing family engagement and participation.

  - Reducing school readiness gap by incorporating and underscoring the Governor's early literacy initiative.

Wisconsin Quick Facts

Early Learning Challenge

Grant eligibility .... Up to $60 million

Round 1 Award: .... Not selected

Additional resources leveraged: $5,161,057

State Demographics

Children under age 6: 421,174

Children under age 6 who are low-income: 164,258

Participation in Early Learning Programs

Head Start and Early Head Start 21,349

Child Care and Development Fund 56,646

State-funded preschool 41,192

Wisconsin ELC Contacts

Eloise Anderson
Secretary
Department of Children and Families
eloise.anderson@wisconsin.gov

Completed Competitive Preference Priorities

	C(1): Learning Standards	C(2): Assessment Systems	C(3): Health, Developmental Needs	C(4): Family Engagement	D(1): PD Framework	D(2): Workforce Supports	E(1): Kindergarten Assessment	E(2): Data Systems	Priority 4: Sustaining Effects K-3	Priority 5: Private Sector Support
Arizona	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arkansas		X		X		X	X			
California	X		X		X	X	X			X
Colorado	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
Connecticut	X	X			X		X	X	X	X
Delaware	X		X		X	X	X		X	
District of Columbia	X		X	X	X	X	X			
Florida	X	X			X	X	X	X		
Georgia	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hawaii	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Illinois	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Iowa		X	X		X		X	X		
Kansas	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Kentucky	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Maine	X	X			X	X		X		
Maryland	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Massachusetts	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Michigan	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Minnesota	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
Mississippi	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Missouri	X		X	X	X	X		X		X
Nebraska	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nevada	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Jersey	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
New Mexico	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
New York	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
North Carolina	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Ohio	X	X			X		X	X	X	X
Oklahoma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Oregon	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
Pennsylvania	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Puerto Rico	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Rhode Island	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
Vermont	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Washington	X			X	X		X		X	X
West Virginia	X		X		X		X			
Wisconsin	X			X	X	X	X	X		X

States were required to complete 100% of Section A-Successful State Systems and Section B-High Quality Programs and were required to address at least 50% of the areas in Sections C, D, and E

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge
Round One Results

Applicant	Rank	Total Points (300 possible)	Funding Awarded
North Carolina	1	269.6	$69,991,121
Massachusetts	2	267.0	$50,000,000
Washington	3	263.8	$60,000,000
Delaware	4	261.2	$49,878,774
Ohio	5	261.0	$69,993,362
Maryland	6	252.0	$49,999,143
Minnesota	7	250.8	$44,858,313
Rhode Island	8	243.8	$50,000,000
California	9	243.6	$52,572,935
New Mexico	10	236.0	
Wisconsin	11	234.0	
Colorado	12	233.4	
Oregon	13	232.8	
Illinois	14	226.2	
New Jersey	15	221.8	
Pennsylvania	16	221.2	
Maine	17	220.6	
Michigan	18	216.0	
Florida	19	212.6	
Connecticut	20	211.4	
Kentucky	21	208.4	
West Virginia	22	198.4	
New York	23	198.0	
Missouri	24	197.8	
Georgia	25	189.8	
District of Columbia	26	187.2	
Vermont	27	187.2	
Arizona	28	186.8	
Nevada	29	179.6	
Oklahoma	30	175.6	
Arkansas	31	174.2	
Nebraska	32	163.8	
Kansas	33	150.0	
Iowa	34	147.0	
Mississippi	35	142.6	
Hawaii	36	135.2	
Puerto Rico	37	104.4	