



The Challenge of Building Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems in the Race to the Top:

Considerations and Resources for States Preparing Federal Early Learning Challenge Applications

Purpose of this tool:

September 2011

This tool is intended to help state leaders planning a Federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application do so within the framework of building a comprehensive early childhood system. The Early Childhood Systems Working Group (ECSWG) urges state leaders to use this opportunity to engage early learning and development, health, and family leadership and support sectors¹ in the planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of their state early childhood system. Earlier this year, the ECSWG released a revised graphic to assist state leaders building comprehensive early childhood systems. The graphic includes values and principles that can serve as critical guideposts to center state leaders' decisions and assess the extent to which the state system is doing what it intends for children and families (see Figure 1).

"The RTT-ELC competition does not create new early learning and development programs, nor is it a vehicle for maintenance of the status quo. Rather, the RTT-ELC program will support States that demonstrate their commitment to integrating and aligning resources and policies across all of the State agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development. It will further provide incentives to the States that commit to and implement high-quality early learning and development programs statewide."

- Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Executive Summary, August 2011

Rationale:

The RTT-ELC goals are to improve the quality of early learning and development and close the achievement gap for children with high needs.

Applicants must address all criteria under: A) Successful State Systems and B) High Quality, Accountable Programs. States may choose from within the criteria in the areas of: C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, D) A Great Early Childhood Workforce, and E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress. Federal guidelines make clear that this is an opportunity to move beyond traditional dividing lines through coordinated planning and shared resources across early learning and development, health, and family leadership and support. This is consistent with the goals and functions of a comprehensive early childhood system developed by ECSWG. In fact, it is not possible to improve school readiness for Children with High Needs without a more coordinated approach to supporting child and family health, economic, social, and behavioral needs within early learning and development programs.

How to use this tool:

To assist state leaders, this tool reviews the RTT-ELC guidelines through the lens of the ECSWG vision (see Figure 1) for what a comprehensive early childhood system should deliver for children and families using six critical functions. It may be used while preparing an application and/or during the implementation of a RTT-ELC plan. The functions are:

- Define and coordinate leadership
- Finance strategically
- Enhance and align standards
- Create and support improvement strategies
- Ensure accountability

State leaders may use this tool to:

- See how the six critical functions of a comprehensive system map to all the specific RTT-ELC criteria (Figure 2);

¹ See Appendix: Potential Partners and Relevant Federal Funding Streams to see how we define ALL "sectors" and "federal funding" relevant to building early childhood systems. From this point the tool will use "all sectors" and "all federal funding" to refer to that comprehensive list.

- Review questions and considerations to prompt thinking about how specific criteria can be addressed in the context of a comprehensive early childhood system.

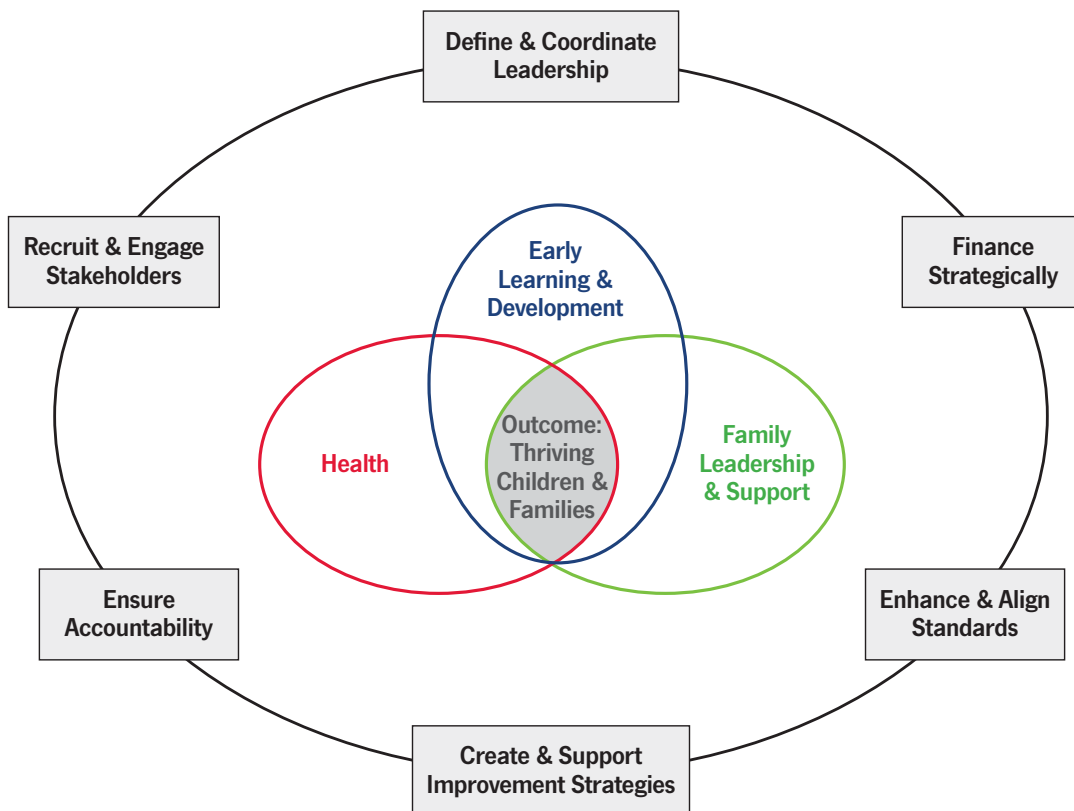
Resources (including on-line links) that ECSWG member organizations have produced and believe would be helpful to state leaders are available at www.elccollaborative.org.

Contributing individuals and organizations:

This tool is the product of many individuals who participate in the ECSWG. Rachel Schumacher of R. Schumacher Consulting led the development process. Those who contributed to its development along the way included: Charlie Bruner, State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network; Lori Connors Tadros, The Finance Project; Harriet Dichter, First Five Years Fund and the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative; Kathy Glazer, Build Initiative and the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative; Anna Lovejoy, consultant, Center for Study of Social Policy; Jana Martella, NAECS-SDE and NARA Licensing; Christine Johnson-Staub, Center for Law and Social Policy; Sarah LeMoine and Davida McDonald, National Association for the Education of Young Children; Cindy Oser, ZERO TO THREE; Ann Reale, ICF International; Sheila Smith, National Center for Children in Poverty; Louise Stoney, Alliance for Early Childhood Finance; Amanda Szekely, National Governors’ Association. Additional ECSWG organizations suggested resources to include. Please note that limited time and restrictions on federal contractors’ ability to participate in activities to assist states with federal applications meant that not all ESCWG members were able to participate in developing the tool or list of resources.

For more information or assistance, please contact Kathy Glazer (kglazer@buildinitiative.org).

Figure 1. The ECSWG – What are the Functions of a Comprehensive Early Childhood System?



- Values and Principles:** Optimally, a comprehensive early childhood system will:
- Reach all children and families, and as early as possible, with needed services and supports
 - Genuinely include and effectively accommodate children with special needs
 - Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, cultures and communities of children and families
 - Ensure stability and continuity of services along a continuum from prenatal into school entry and beyond
 - Ease access for families and transitions for children
 - Value parents as decision makers and leaders

Figure 2

Functions of a Comprehensive Early Childhood System	ECSWG Strategies Within Functions	Relevant RTT-ELC Criteria
Define and Coordinate Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a shared understanding of roles and joint leadership to make greater progress toward common goals. • Set guiding vision, mission, principles, outcomes, and benchmarks for how the system sectors work together. • Coordinate relevant governance structures and policies. 	<p>(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development</p> <p>(A)(2) Articulating the State’s rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals</p> <p>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the state</p>
Finance Strategically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fiscal policies that move system sectors toward delivery of services in a comprehensive manner. • Provide financial incentives for ongoing quality and system improvement. • Allow and incentivize layering (e.g. braiding and/or blending) of funding streams.² • Leverage federal, state, local, and private dollars across systems. • Secure sufficient and sustainable funding to support progress toward common goals. 	<p>(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development</p> <p>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant</p> <p>(B)(2) Promoting Participation in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</p> <p>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</p> <p>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems</p> <p>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align standards both within and across system sectors. • Use standards to integrate services and practices across system sectors as appropriate. • Update standards regularly to reflect current child and family needs and best practices. 	<p>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</p> <p>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards</p> <p>(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High-Needs to improve school readiness</p> <p>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families</p> <p>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials</p>
Create and Support Improvement Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop approaches that drive continuous improvement in both quality and in services and their delivery. • Connect improvement activities both within and across service sectors. • Design strategies that meet standards and achieve desired results of a comprehensive system for children and families. 	<p>(B)(3) Rating, monitoring, and improving Early Learning and Development Programs</p> <p>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</p> <p>(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High-Needs to improve school readiness</p> <p>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities</p> <p>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies</p>

² Layering means using multiple funding streams that are designated for different purposes to put together coordinated, comprehensive early childhood services for children and their families. Using this approach, states often employ careful cost allocation methods to ensure appropriate uses of funding sources. Another term for this is braiding. Blending means funds from two or more programs are integrated or “blended” in order to pay for the set of services. This approach can work with flexible pots of funding.

Functions of a Comprehensive Early Childhood System	ECSWG Strategies Within Functions	Relevant RTT-ELC Criteria
Ensure Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design data systems that track progress on outcomes and benchmarks. Regularly review and use data to guide continuous improvement and inform planning, policy, practice and operations. Connect data across the comprehensive early childhood system to answer critical policy questions. 	<p>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</p> <p>(B)(4) Validating the effectiveness of State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems</p> <p>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems</p> <p>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry</p> <p>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies</p>
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use strategic communication to increase understanding of requirements and benefits of a comprehensive early childhood system. Build a broad constituency to support investment in a comprehensive early childhood system. Partner with families as leaders in building a comprehensive early childhood system. 	<p>(A)(2) Demonstrating past commitment and investment in supporting Early Learning and Development Programs</p> <p>(B)(2) Promoting Participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</p> <p>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families</p>



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Core Area

(A) Successful State Systems (65 points)

- (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development (20 points)
- (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals (20 points)
- (A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State (10 points)
- (A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant (15 points)

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Define and Coordinate Leadership	<p>Has the state taken steps toward establishing common goals and guiding principles across the sectors of the early childhood system, drawing from the existing goals of other decision-making and advisory bodies on early childhood issues (e.g. Early Childhood Advisory Councils, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grants, State Interagency Coordinating Councils, Project LAUNCH federal grant project advisories, Strengthening Families State Leadership Team)?</p> <p>Are all the state and local level leaders from all child serving sectors - including early learning and development, health and behavioral health, family leadership and support - meaningfully involved in developing common goals and guiding principles, and in drafting the ELC application?</p> <p>Are there any pieces of legislation, rules, formal agreements (e.g. interagency MOU's, jointly administered RFPs, contracts) or other means that establish and implement this shared understanding going forward?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Finance Strategically	<p>Have state leaders analyzed or committed to analyzing all federal, state, local, and private funding across all sectors and identified alignment opportunities that would leverage services for low-income children (from birth to school entry and beyond) and families?</p> <p>How will the state require or encourage layering and leveraging of all funding streams to deliver more coordinated and comprehensive early childhood services at the state and/or local levels? What requirements will be built into the ELC application plan to link one funding source/program/grant to another?</p> <p>Does the budget include accurate estimates of costs to fully implement the ELC plan? Has the leadership team identified options for sustaining this investment after the end of the grant period?</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<p>Have the state leaders with the expertise on and authority over various early childhood program standards across all sectors committed to the goals of the ELC application outlined above? Will they have a central role in collaboratively developing and implementing the relevant section of the state ELC application? Will parents have a role in collaboratively developing the program standards?</p>
Create and Implement Improvement Strategies	<p>How will the state coordinate intake systems and eligibility requirements for High Need children and families across all sectors and agencies providing early learning and development services?</p> <p>Will the state plan make it easier for families to access multiple services across all sectors at the appropriate intensity, and in the most effective combination? Will families be able to sustain access to and continuity of services as their eligibility shifts from one funding stream to another?</p> <p>Are the policies directing all quality improvement systems (including professional development, technical assistance, on-site consultation, and operations) for early learning and development, designing policies to increase coordination and alignment with all service sectors to work effectively with High Needs children and families?</p>
Ensure Accountability	<p>Does the state have the capacity to collect data from all publicly funded early learning and development programs regardless of funding stream (child care subsidy, Head Start/Early Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, home visiting, private foundation, parent fees, Part C and Part B of IDEA, etc.)? Using that data, can the state identify/track the early learning and development services children and their families funded by multiple federal/state/local/private entities receive and later development of children and families up to and beyond kindergarten?</p> <p>Does the state have a strategy to coordinate program monitoring and accountability across sectors where appropriate (e.g. a single or coordinated monitoring visit or sharing monitoring data across sectors or funding streams)? For example, licensing, CACFP, Head Start/Early Head Start, state prekindergarten, and QRIS visits?</p>
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<p>Does the ELC application leadership team include individuals who think systematically and bring in commanding knowledge and commitment to all sectors - early learning and development, health and behavioral health, family leadership, engagement, and support?</p> <p>How does the state engage parent leaders and those authentically representing culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders?</p> <p>How will this diverse range of stakeholder continue to be engaged as the state moves forward?</p>



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Core Area

B. High Quality, Accountable Programs

- (B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (10 points)
- (B)(2) Promoting Participation in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (15 points)
- (B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs (15 points)
- (B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs (20 points)
- (B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (15 points)

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Define and Coordinate Leadership	<p>How are leaders in all sectors supporting the QRIS, specifically by bringing expertise to the development of the QRIS and by integrating the QRIS or core elements of it into their own systems?</p> <p>Are there existing state, local, or private entities or individuals involved in developing the QRIS who bring expertise on High Needs children and families (including those who have limited English proficiency), cultural and linguistic diversity of the service population and providers, and addressing children with special needs? How will parents be involved in informing the QRIS standards?</p> <p>What resources and expertise are being made available from across sectors and relevant funding streams to assist in validation of the QRIS?</p>
Finance Strategically	<p>Which funding resources from all sectors, beyond those connected to early learning and development, are being made available to assist in the development, implementation, and validation of the QRIS?</p> <p>Does the state plan to connect all public funding for early learning and development programs to quality standards that address linkages to health and family leadership and support systems (e.g. QRIS requirements; state standards for home visiting; state pre-kindergarten)? How will public funding procedures and payment levels secure access to programs meeting high quality, comprehensive standards?</p> <p>How will subgroups of children—such as infants and toddlers, children with special needs, those in the child welfare system or ELL children— be prioritized for participation at the highest levels of the QRIS? For example, what types of financial incentives will be used to assure that costs for the inclusion of these children at the highest level of the QRIS are covered through quality awards, rate add-ons, special weighting for financial resources by inclusion of these children in high levels of the QRIS? When systems serving High Need children, such as child welfare or early intervention/special education, purchase early learning and development services with their funds, will they be limited to purchasing services only from those programs within the QRIS, and/or at a certain level of the rating system?</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<p>Has the state aligned child, program, and practitioner standards across all sectors as relevant? For example, are there opportunities to ensure that the standards in each of these systems focus on the same child outcome standards, and that the program and practitioner standards align to those child outcome standards, even if not integrated?</p> <p>What are the goals of the various child, program and practitioner standards and how well do each of these standards mesh across the systems?</p> <p>Are there opportunities for the state to use cross-walked, aligned standards to integrate services and practices across system sectors? For example, are there opportunities to create integrated standards for children, programs, and practitioners that cross sectors?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Create and Implement Improvement Strategies	<p>Has the state cross-walked early learning and development improvement strategies, at all levels, (i.e., program, practice, and the QRIS system), with efforts in health and behavioral health, and family leadership and support sectors as appropriate?</p> <p>For example, what are the goals of the various quality improvement strategies and how well do each of these goals mesh across the systems? Are there opportunities to ensure that the quality improvement strategies in each of these systems are focused on the same goals for children and families even if not integrated?</p> <p>Do these alignment efforts maximize cross-sector efficiency and impact? For example, are there opportunities to create integrated quality improvement strategies on substantive improvement areas such as child assessment, interpreting data to inform quality improvement, etc.?</p>
Ensure Accountability	<p>Where there is alignment and or integration of the QRIS with other sectors, has the state created aligned and/or integrated approaches for data collection, analysis and feedback?</p> <p>Has the state created aligned and/or integrated approaches for monitoring and oversight across all relevant early childhood sectors?</p> <p>What opportunities are there to create an integrated and unified cross-system/sector approach to family satisfaction and recommendations for improvement, encompassing not just the QRIS but other publicly-funded aspects of the early childhood system in health, public health, family support/home visiting?</p>
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<p>How will stakeholders from the sectors of health and behavioral health and the family leadership and support be supported to ensure their active and ongoing engagement in the QRIS development and implementation?</p> <p>How will stakeholders from the broader community of business, civic leaders, etc. be supported to ensure their active engagement? How will K-12 leaders be supported to ensure their active engagement? How will parents be supported to ensure their active engagement?</p>



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Focused Investment Area

(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children (60 points)

- (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards
- (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems
- (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.
- (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Define and Coordinate Leadership	<p>Are there experts on age-appropriate expectations for child cognitive, social/emotional, physical and behavioral health and development involved in writing or reviewing state early learning and development standards and the Comprehensive Assessment System? Who has expertise to inform the development and implementation of child, program, and practitioner standards to ensure they address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and children with special needs? What is the role of these experts in early learning and development system reform?</p> <p>How will families be engaged as leaders in discussions of standards, assessments, child outcomes, etc.?</p> <p>Who will define the ongoing leadership structure to assure that outcomes and standards are being met and improvements sustained throughout the system?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Finance Strategically	<p>Has the state determined and planned for the cost of providing a professional development and training system for ALL practitioners to ensure they effectively implement early learning and development standards, conduct developmentally appropriate assessments, use assessment data appropriately, and continually improve curriculum and program design?</p> <p>Has the state mapped all early learning and development programs, including home-visiting/family support programs, by location, population served, and approach to identify gaps and opportunities to coordinate services for High Need children and families?</p> <p>How is the state Medicaid plan strategically leveraged to contribute to the development and sustainability of the Comprehensive Assessment System, and to addressing the health, behavior and development of High Needs children?</p> <p>Will the state ensure that those children being served by state systems serving high risk families (e.g. child welfare, IDEA Part C, ESEA Title I, home visiting, substance abuse, TANF, etc.) are given priority for access to high quality early learning and development services?</p> <p>How are the state Home Visiting plan and Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funding being leveraged to support development, implementation and assessment of standards related to family leadership and support?</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<p>How will the state ensure the alignment and use of common standards across the sectors of the comprehensive early childhood service system? How does this fit into the work of the K-12 system? Is there a coordinated approach for professional preparation and ongoing professional development and training for providers in the use of the common standards across all sectors birth to school entry and beyond?</p> <p>Who within the state plan is responsible for aligning and adopting the components of the Comprehensive Assessment System across all early childhood sectors?</p> <p>How will the state ensure integration of standards addressing family leadership, engagement and support across programs, including appropriate training for providers and their service partners?</p>
Create and Implement Improvement Strategies	<p>Is there a plan to ensure that early childhood professionals understand the appropriate use of the standards and comprehensive assessment data? Are there opportunities to bring together professionals across disciplines and health, early learning and family leadership/engagement sectors for training?</p> <p>How does the state encourage and support partnerships between early learning programs, parents, physical and developmental health providers, the K-12 system and other community service providers to more consistently identify and address the developmental needs of children birth to five?</p> <p>How have/will stakeholders with expertise in service and system design and delivery, capacity building, and professional development in all sectors be engaged to support improved outcomes for high needs children?</p>
Ensure Accountability	<p>Has the state reviewed assessment requirements for all publicly funded early learning and development programs to determine how best to align and coordinate them?</p> <p>How will the state plan assure the developmental and cultural appropriateness of comprehensive assessment tools and processes?</p> <p>Is there a plan (with leadership and strategic financing) for ensuring that children who need referrals and follow-up actions based on screening and assessment have received those services?</p> <p>What measures of progress on family leadership and engagement will be included in the Comprehensive Assessment System? What tools will be used?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<p>How will parents be engaged in the development or strengthening of early learning and development standards and family leadership and support standards? How will parents be included in the development of accountability measures to ensure that the standards are being met?</p> <p>How will assessment data be shared with families and communities?</p> <p>What feedback mechanisms will be available to state level systems leaders and to programs, parents and practitioners to assure accountability and allow for ongoing course corrections in this area?</p>



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Focused Investment Area

(D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce (40 points)

(D)(1) Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competencies and a progression of credentials

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

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations ³
Enhance and Align Standards	<p><i>The ELC defines Early Childhood Educator as: any professional working in an Early Learning and Development Program, including but not limited to center-based and family child care providers; infant and toddler specialists; early intervention specialists and early childhood special educators; home visitors; related services providers; administrators such as directors, supervisors, and other early learning and development leaders; Head Start teachers; Early Head Start teachers; preschool and other teachers; teacher assistants; family service staff; and health coordinators.</i></p> <p>Does the state define the early childhood workforce broadly to include those working directly with young children (birth to school age and beyond) not only in early care and education, but also health, mental health, early intervention/special needs, home visitation, child welfare, family support, and other relevant fields? How will existing advisory bodies and others with expertise in developing practitioner standards in this broader definition of early childhood workforce contribute to defining appropriate and cross-cutting core knowledge and competencies and credentials?</p> <p>Does the state have commitment from relevant training, credentialing, consultation, and higher education entities across the broader early childhood system that they will work together to implement the core knowledge and competencies by integrating and aligning the professional development offerings and curricula in their systems? Are there opportunities to develop cross-sector professional development opportunities (for example, cross-sector credentialing on infant mental health consultants)?</p> <p>Has the state aligned their public school teacher credentialing program to include practitioners serving children before kindergarten entry?</p> <p>Will the state establish any specific interagency entities, rules or policies (e.g. interagency MOUs; jointly administered RFPs; common policies and procedures for credentialing or financial aid/scholarships; articulation agreements based on core competencies) that can be the foundation for ongoing collaboration across sectors regarding professional development standards, curriculum development, credentialing, articulation, scholarships, financial incentives, or other relevant components of the state early childhood professional development system?</p>

³ Several questions included in for Section D are drawn from the National Association for the Education of Young Children – Early Childhood Workforce Initiative. (2010). *State Policy Blueprint Planning Guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/ecwsi/PolicyBlueprintPlanningGuide.pdf>.

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations ³
Finance Strategically	<p>What separately administered funding resources for providing training, technical assistance, consulting, and access to higher education will the state leverage and coordinate to achieve this goal? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will local grantee and federal Head Start/Early Head Start training and technical assistance system resources be included? • Has the state considered leveraging workforce development funds from the Department of Labor, Agriculture, Education, and other federal, state and private sources? <p>Does the state plan to connect all public funding for early learning and development programs (e.g. QRIS requirements; state standards for home visiting; state pre-kindergarten) to quality standards that address linkages to health and behavioral health and family leadership and support systems?</p> <p>Will state policy explicitly address workforce compensation and include specific financing in all sectors of the system to support compensation equivalent to positions within and across fields requiring similar preparation and experience?</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<p>What professional preparation and ongoing education will (or does) the state require of those serving Children with High Need across sectors, including child care, state pre-kindergarten, Head Start and home visiting?</p> <p>Do standards for preparation and ongoing development apply to all early childhood professionals regardless of role or work setting? Do they integrate or align existing teacher licensing, state-based credentials, Head Start, prekindergarten, and other related standards from the various early childhood education sectors, across agencies and quality initiatives?</p> <p>How will the state embed knowledge and competencies regarding approaches to family leadership and support and child health promotion, screening, and referral into standards for early childhood practitioners across sectors or create specializations related to this knowledge and competencies? Are there standards specific to working with children and strengthening families with high need, e.g. low-income families, children and parents who are Limited English Proficient, children with special needs, culturally and linguistically diverse families?</p> <p>Does the state plan allow for career pathways from non-credit training through advanced higher education and support qualification requirements for all sectors? Does it include alternate pathways to credentials?</p>
Create and Implement Improvement Strategies	<p>How will state professional development systems in all sectors work in collaboration to strengthen the capacity of all sectors to work with children? For example, are there opportunities to coordinate or jointly create initiatives for mentoring and coaching, peer-to-peer support cohorts, financial aid assistance, to help members of the workforce (including currently working professionals) achieve their goals?</p> <p>How will institutions of higher education, including community colleges, be involved in workforce development?</p> <p>Does the state have a network of qualified infant-toddler specialists that can support all early childhood professionals across sectors working with infants and toddlers and their families to implement evidence-based practice?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations ³
Ensure Accountability	<p>Does the state plan to or have the capacity to track and evaluate the impact of professional development strategies on quality of practice, compensation, and continuity of the workforce? Will the state be able to track, compare, and contrast the impact across early learning and development, health, and family leadership and support sectors? If there is an early care and education workforce registry, is it possible to link the data to other early childhood professional registries?</p> <p>Will the state data system collect cross-sector workforce data by role, program setting, education (including credentials and/or degrees), demographic characteristics, experience in the field, population and age of children served, and/or compensation; data related to program sustainability, stability, and other access and support related issues; and/or that data systems be intentional in sharing data with those it represents and who need it?</p> <p>How will the state include/address families and communities to inform accountability processes regarding the competencies of the workforce? How will the state assess the extent to which the early learning and development workforce has attained competencies regarding family leadership and support and child health promotion?</p>
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<p>How will the state inform prospective students and current members of the early childhood workforce about opportunities for financial aid and other supports? Does the state plan include expectations, requirements and/or supports for all early childhood professionals across sectors and settings to develop individual professional development plans to assist in developing or articulating their career goals, and to guide and inform desired career advancement and decisions regarding professional development opportunities?</p> <p>How will the state communicate the importance of professional preparation and ongoing education for the workforce to other stakeholders (parents, business, private philanthropy, higher education)? What coordinating communication strategies across sectors will they use?</p> <p>How will the state encourage and support the culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood workforce population to achieve higher levels of education?</p>



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Focused Investment Area

(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress (40 points)

- (E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry
- (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations ³
Define and Coordinate Leadership	<p>Do the planning and governance structures for the early childhood comprehensive assessment and data systems include representation and experts across all sectors and functions?</p> <p>Are the governance and leadership structures for the assessment and data systems designed to encourage the exchange of comprehensive information across multiple agencies, programs, services, and at all [age] levels?</p>

How Would a Coordinated Early Childhood System Approach This?	Questions and Considerations ³
Finance Strategically	<p>Has the state deployed available funding sufficient to assure the assessment and data systems are comprehensive, cover all dimensions of child development and family strength, and address all sectors of the system?</p> <p>Will the system collect comprehensive fiscal information in order to inform budgetary decisions? For example: what dollars are spent, on which children and in which communities; and compensation levels of staffing serving those children?</p> <p>Can the state conduct fiscal mapping compared to the child and program assessment outcomes to show the effects of the investments in communities and programs?</p>
Enhance and Align Standards	<p>How will the state ensure the alignment and use of common early learning and development standards at the child, program and practitioner levels across the comprehensive early childhood service system- including the incorporation of standards relevant to the child health and behavioral health, family leadership and support sectors?</p> <p>How will the state incorporate these standards in a coordinated approach for professional preparation and ongoing professional development in all sectors?</p> <p>If the state already has core program and child outcomes standards in place, how will they develop a revision or expansion plan to assure the standards cover: 1) all domains of learning and development, 2) all ages birth through K and beyond, 3) family engagement, leadership, and support, and 4) health and behavioral health?</p>
Create and Implement Improvement Strategies	<p>As the state designs its early childhood data and assessment systems, how will they be used to inform continuous improvement across different programs and sectors serving young children?</p> <p>Has the state mapped early childhood programs and services by location, population served, and approach in order to identify gaps and opportunities to coordinate services for low-income children and families?</p> <p>How does the professional development system include intentional training and education on interpreting and using data for planning and improvement of practice?</p>
Ensure Accountability	<p>As the state implements the “Essential Data Elements” – how will it assure that definitions and critical child, program, and workforce data elements include all sectors of the system?</p> <p>How will the state assure the design of its comprehensive assessment and data systems are coordinated and comprehensive, and will provide useful information for the improvement of practices, services and policies across all sectors?</p>
Recruit and Engage Stakeholders	<p>How will the state involve personnel and experts from all state agencies required to participate with MOUs in the development of their data and assessment systems?</p> <p>How does the state plan to use data to engage and inform parents and families, community members, and key interest groups, including leaders and members of diverse cultures and communities?</p> <p>How will data and assessment results be used to recruit and engage key stakeholders among the business and philanthropy communities to support public-private partnerships?</p>

Appendix – Potential Partners and Relevant Federal Programs/Funding Streams

Sectors	Potential State Agency Partners	Relevant Federal Programs/Funding Streams
Early Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care Subsidy Assistance • Child Care Licensing • Child Care Resource and Referral • K-12 Education • Head Start – State Collaboration Office • Early Intervention/Special Education • Home Visiting Agencies⁴ • Institutions of Higher Education/State and Community Colleges • State prekindergarten 	<p>CCDF -Child Care and Development Fund</p> <p>ESEA Title 1 - Elementary and Secondary Education Act</p> <p>Financial Assistance for Children of Low-income Families - Early Childhood Programs</p> <p>IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Part B, Section 619 Preschool Grants and Part C Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities</p> <p>EHS/HS - Early Head Start/Head Start</p> <p>HEA - Higher Education Act</p> <p>21st Century Community Learning Grants</p> <p>Promise Neighborhoods Grants</p>
Health and Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Mental Health • Maternal and Child Health⁵ • Medicaid • Public Health • Nutrition Promotion 	<p>CACFP - Child and Adult Care Food Program</p> <p>CCMHS - Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program – Part E of Title V, Public Health Service Act, as amended</p> <p>CMHSBG - Community Mental Health Services Block Grant</p> <p>CSBG - Community Service Block Grant</p> <p>EPSDT - Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program</p> <p>MCHBG – Title V - Maternal and Child Health Block Grant – Title V</p> <p>SCHIP/CHIP -State Children’s Health Insurance Program (Title XXI of the Social Security Act)</p> <p>SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program)</p> <p>WIC - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children</p>
Family Leadership and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Trust Fund/Child Abuse Prevention • Child Welfare/Child and Family Services • Home Visiting Agencies • Maternal and Child Health Welfare/Workforce Development • Substance Abuse Services • Adult Education/ Family Literacy • Immigrant/Refugee Assistance 	<p>CAPTA - Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act</p> <p>CBCAP -Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention</p> <p>EBHV - Evidence-Based Home Visiting</p> <p>MIEC - Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program</p> <p>SAPT- Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant</p> <p>SSBG - Social Services Block Grant</p> <p>TANF -Temporary Assistance for Needy Families</p> <p>Title IV-B & IV-E of the SSA - Title IV-B & IV-E of the Social Security Act</p>

⁴ Home visiting agencies are potential partners that can be categorized under early learning and development and family leadership and support.

⁵ Maternal and Child Health is a potential partner that can be categorized under health and behavioral health and family leadership and support.