

NEVADA'S PROMISE

RACE TO THE TOP EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE: AN OVERVIEW OF NEVADA'S ROADMAP TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

September 2011



A Briefing on Nevada's Response to the Challenge

*Submitted by Margot Chappel, Director
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Dear Stakeholder,

In Governor Sandoval's letter of intent, submitted for Nevada to apply for the **Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge** (RtT-ELC) federal funding, he appointed the Department of Health and Human Services as the lead agency with the state Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to take the lead in assembling our state's application. The application includes clear directives for this application to be a joint effort between DHHS and the Department of Education. This briefing explains the process we will follow to develop Nevada's plan to build an integrated system of early learning and development.

Nevada's vision for meeting this challenge is that **Nevada's children will be safe, healthy, and thriving during the first eight years of life, and the system will support children and families in achieving their full potential**. This system will reflect a more unified approach to supporting young children and their families — one that increases access and quality and helps ensure that children enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful.

This competition is organized around five key areas of reform:

- Successful State Systems
- High-Quality, Accountable Programs
- Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
- A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and
- Measuring Outcomes and Progress

As this work progresses, a draft plan will be distributed for feedback. If you would be interested in being a part of this process and helping put our state's application together, providing feedback, or submitting a letter of support, please contact me at mchappel@dhhs.nv.gov **as soon as possible**. We are committed to engaging in a transparent and inclusive process as we develop this important plan to align statewide and local resources and priorities around the best interests of Nevada's children, and ultimately, ensure that our youth are ready to compete in the global economy of the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Margot Chappel, Director
Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems Office

The Value of the RTT-Early Learning Challenge

What is the Early Learning Challenge?

QUALITY as the Basis for Public Investment

- A voluntary federal initiative that helps states build more efficient and effective early learning systems for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers—and their families
- Not about program expansion...Focuses on improving, linking, & aligning
- Honors gubernatorial leadership
- Addresses needs of the most vulnerable children
- Strengthens infrastructure: standards, assessment, data systems
- Supports quality and accountability through Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)
- Builds a quality workforce by linking professional development to QRIS

Our Vision

“Nevada’s children will be safe, healthy, and thriving during the first eight years of life, and the system will support children and families in achieving their full potential.”

Why It Matters

- ☑ Produces better education, health, family and economic outcomes
- ☑ Is key to increasing school readiness, academic achievement, college graduation, good citizenship and a productive workforce
- ☑ Helps states get the most out of investments in education, health, public safety and economic development—helping to reduce deficits through better outcomes and greater productivity

What It Takes

- **Assertive leadership**
 - **Coherent organizational structure**
 - **Commitment to high quality**
 - **Focus on high-needs children**
 - **Commitment to develop needed systems**

HOW IT WORKS

1. States compete for the Early Learning Challenge
2. The federal government, through the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, sets competition guidelines
3. States are free to creatively build early learning systems that best meet the needs of local families and communities
4. Challenge funds can supplement but not supplant

Grant period: December 31, 2011 to December 31, 2015

Funding Levels: (based on population of low-income young children)

- Up to \$100 million CA, FL, NY, TX
- Up to \$70 million AZ, GA, IL, MI, NC, OH, PA
- Up to \$60 million AL, CO, IN, KY, LA, MO, NJ, OK, PR, SC, TN, VA, WA, WI
- Up to **\$50 million** AK, AR, CT, DE, DC, HI, ID, IA, KS, ME, MD, MA, MN, MS, MT, NE, NH, NM, **NEVADA**, ND, OR, RI, SD, UT, VT, WV, WY

Timeline: Applications due October 19, 2011 **Total Funding Available for the Challenge:** \$500 million

Absolute Priority: Promoting school readiness for children with high needs

Definition: States must build systems that increase the quality of early learning and development programs for children with high needs so they enter kindergarten prepared, by integrating and aligning resources and policies

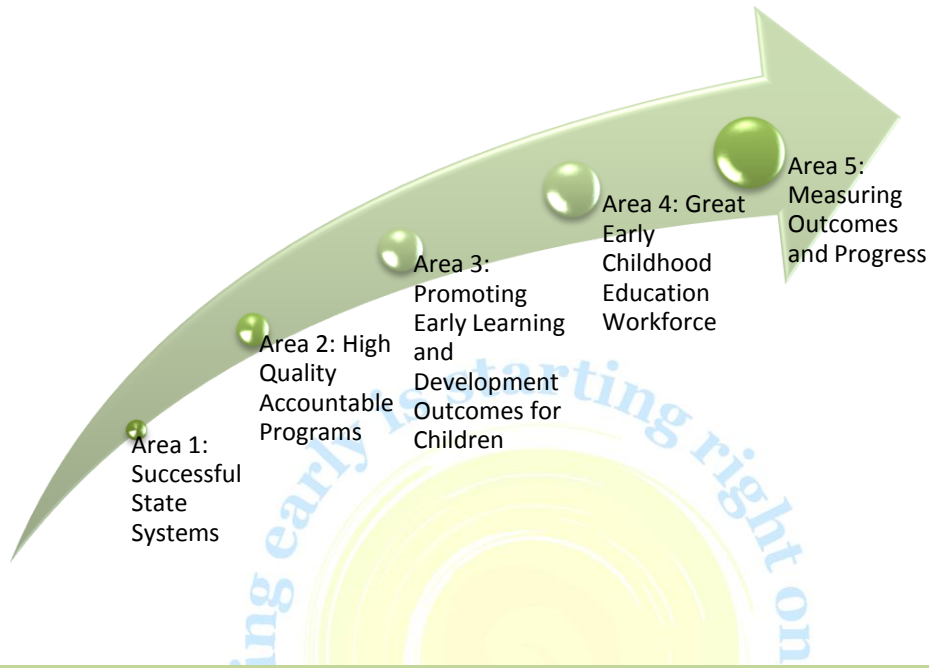
- across participating State agencies, **AND**
- designing and implementing a common, statewide tiered quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)

Early Learning Challenge Points Overview	Points Available	Percentage
1. Successful State Systems	65	23
2. High-Quality, Accountable Systems	75	27
3. Promoting Early Learning & Development Outcomes for Children	60	21
4. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce	40	14
5. Measuring Outcomes and Progress	40	14
Total points available for selection criteria	280	100
Competitive Priority 1: Including all early learning & development programs in the QRIS	10	
Competitive Priority 2: Understanding status of learning & development at Kindergarten entry	10	
Grand Total	300	

Five Areas Must be Addressed:

1. Successful State Systems
2. High-Quality, Accountable Programs
3. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
4. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce
5. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

NEVADA'S ROADMAP TO SUCCESS



Area 1: Successful State Systems

1. **Demonstrate past commitment** to early learning and development through:
 - financial investments
 - participation of children with high needs
 - legislation, policies, or practices
 - current work in standards, assessments, family engagement, workforce, and data practices
2. **Articulate the State's rationale for its reform agenda** and goals for improving program quality and child outcomes
3. **Align and coordinate early learning and development across the state** through a governance structure that includes interagency integration and broad stakeholder engagement.
4. **Develop a budget** that shows how federal, state, local, and private resources (including CCDF quality dollars) align with, supplement, support, and sustain the plan.

Area 2: High-Quality, Accountable Programs

1. **Develop and adopt a tiered QRIS based on common program standards**, including:
 - early learning standards
 - a comprehensive assessment system
 - educator qualifications
 - family engagement
 - health promotion
 - effective data practices
 - linkages to state licensing

2. **Promote participation in the QRIS**, with goals of having all publicly-funded programs—including state and federal programs—participate at an increasing rate.
3. **Rate and monitor programs** using valid tools, trained monitors, and sufficient frequency. Make ratings readily available and easy to understand.
4. **Promote access to high-quality programs** through
 - continuous program improvement through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, etc.
 - support for working families to meet their needs for full day/full year transportation, meals, and family support services
 - setting targets for increasing top tier programs and their enrollment of children with high needs
5. **Validate the QRIS** by showing that tiers are linked to levels of program quality and linking changes in ratings to progress for children’s learning outcomes, using an independent evaluator.

Area 3: Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

1. **Develop and use statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards** across programs for infants, toddlers, & preschoolers that
 - are developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate.
 - cover domains of language and literacy, cognition, approaches to learning, physical, and social and emotional development.
 - Incorporate these standards into program standards, curricula, assessments, workforce competencies, and professional development; and align them with K-3 standards.
2. **Support effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems** that include
 - screening measures
 - formative assessments
 - measures of environmental quality
 - measures of adult child interactions
 - Educate programs and train providers on purposes, uses, and interpretations of assessment systems.
3. **Address health, behavioral, and developmental needs** by establishing program standards for screening and follow-up and training and supporting providers to meet those standards.
4. **Engage and support families** by including family engagement in program standards, training providers in family engagement strategies, and leveraging home visiting programs and other existing resources to promote family support.

Area 4: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

1. **Develop a common, statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework**—expectations for what educators should know and be able to do—that

- ☞ promotes learning and improved child outcomes
 - ☞ develops a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees
 - ☞ engages higher education and professional development providers.
2. **Use the framework to support educators** by providing professional development and implementing policies and incentives that promote professional improvement and advancement.
 3. **Publicly report data** on educators and **set targets for increasing alignment** with postsecondary institutions and professional development providers and increasing the number and percentage of educators who progress to higher level credentials.

Area 5: Measuring Outcomes and Progress

1. **Administer a common, statewide kindergarten entry assessment** that
 - ☞ is aligned with early learning standards
 - ☞ covers all essential domains of school readiness
 - ☞ is valid, reliable, and appropriate for all children
 - ☞ is reported to statewide data systems
 - ☞ is implemented by the 2014-15 school year
 - ☞ is funded, in significant part, with federal or state resources other than those available under this grant.
2. **Build or enhance an early learning data system** that has all of the essential **data elements**:
 - ☞ unique child identifier or other accurate method to link data on child
 - ☞ a unique statewide educator identifier
 - ☞ child and family demographic information
 - ☞ educator demographic information
 - ☞ program-level data
 - ☞ child-level program participation and attendance data
 - **enables uniform data collection** and exchange
 - **generates timely, relevant, and accessible information** for programs and educators.

Competitive Priorities

Two competitive priorities bring extra points:

1. **Including all early learning and development programs in the QRIS:** States are encouraged to have all licensed or regulated programs participate in the QRIS and to extend licensing and inspection requirements to otherwise non-regulated programs.
2. **Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry:** States are encouraged to implement kindergarten entry assessments that
 - **align** with early learning and development standards
 - **cover all essential domains of school readiness** (language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development)
 - **are valid, reliable, and appropriate** for the target population.

Invitational Priorities

Two invitational priorities, but no points:

1. **Sustaining program effects in the early elementary grades:** States can work to align K-3 standards with early learning standards; ensure transition planning; promote health and family engagement; increase the percentage of children who are on grade-level in reading and math ability by third grade; and leverage existing Federal, State, and local resources.
2. **Encouraging private sector support:** States can show private sector financial and in-kind support.

OUR PROCESS AND TIMELINE

