



AGENDA ITEM: 5

DATE OF MEETING: October 24, 2013

ACTION: _____

INFORMATION: X

RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

SUMMARY

In December 2011, California received a highly competitive Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) federal grant to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for vulnerable young children. Through December 2015, California, led by 17 local efforts in collaboration with the RTT-ELC State Implementation Team and participating state agencies, will work together to ensure positive outcomes for the state’s infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

BACKGROUND

Based on the robust body of research demonstrating that high-quality early learning and development programs can improve young children’s health and social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes; enhance school readiness; and help close the vast school readiness gap, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released the RTT-ELC application on August 23, 2011. A total of 37 RTT-ELC grant applications were submitted, and California was one of nine winning states. Five more states subsequently were awarded in round two.

California requested \$100 million and originally was awarded \$52.6 million with a grant period from January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2015. In July 2013, California received a supplemental award, bringing the total award amount to \$75 million. The Governor designated the California Department of Education (CDE) as the lead fiscal agency and, jointly with First 5 California, staffs an RTT-ELC State Implementation Team to manage the grant and support the local-level work via the Regional Leadership Consortia (Consortia). Other participating state agencies include the California Departments of Developmental Services, Public Health, and Social Services.

The objective of RTT-ELC is to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs, which is defined in the Federal application as:

Children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from low-income families or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English

learners; who reside on “Indian lands” as that term is defined by section 8013(6) of the ESEA; who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.

To address the school readiness gap, the grant identified high priorities for both strengthening the quality of early learning and development programs and increasing access to them, especially for children with high needs. The RTT-ELC is organized around five key areas of reform: (1) Successful State Systems; (2) High-Quality, Accountable Programs; (3) Promoting Early Learning Development Outcomes for Children; (4) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and (5) Measuring Outcomes and Progress.

California’s RTT-ELC grant implements a unique approach that builds upon California’s local and statewide successes to create sustainable capacity at the local level to meet the needs of our early learners (from birth through age five), with a focus on those with the highest needs. As directed and approved by the Governor, California’s plan supports a locally driven quality improvement process that builds upon existing local and statewide successes and investments while creating sustainable capacity at the local level.

Approximately 77 percent of California’s RTT-ELC total grant funding is spent at the local level to support a voluntary network of early learning programs. Each county in the network, known as the Consortia, is led by an established organization that is already operating or developing a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The Consortia includes 17 members in 16 counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Ventura, and Yolo). The number of children under five years of age in these counties is approximately 1.9 million, which represents almost 70 percent of the total children birth to five in California.

In addition, California is using RTT-ELC funding to support one-time investments in state capacity via ten projects plus an evaluation of the local QRIS. The RTT-ELC projects are in four of the five key reform areas and include:

- Reform Area II, High-Quality, Accountable Programs:
 - **Cross Consortia Inter-rater Reliability**
Ensure each consortium has a comprehensive system for rating and monitoring by providing increased support for assessments and for inter-rater reliability training and assessors.
 - **California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Community Care Licensing Division (CCL) Website**
Enhance the CDSS, CCL Website to include educational and training materials for families and child care providers.
 - **Evaluation**
Conduct a validation evaluation of the Consortia’s local QRISs and assess the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children’s learning, development, and school readiness.

- Reform Area III, Promoting Early Learning Development Outcomes for Children:
 - **Electronic Training Materials on Existing Content**
Develop online training overviews of the Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, the Preschool Learning Foundations, their respective Frameworks, and the Environment Rating Scales (ERS).
 - **Screening Tool Training and Distribution**
Provide training on and distribute “Ages and Stages” developmental screening tools to local consortia members for distribution to programs participating in their local QRIS.
 - **California Collaborative for the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CCSEFEL)**
Create a web-based overview of the CCSEFEL teaching pyramid, build a network of regional CCSEFEL trainers and coaches, and support and expand implementation of the CCSEFEL teaching pyramid to fidelity in interested sites in the local consortia.
 - **Home Visiting**
Provide training to California Department of Public Health’s local California Home Visiting Program staff on implementing the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) practices and on lessons from the “Three R’s of Early Childhood: Relationships, Resilience, and Readiness” DVD.
 - **California Department of Developmental Services (CDDS), Comprehensive System of Personnel Development for Early Start**
Provide coordinated training for early intervention program staff and support implementation of best practices in developmental and health screening at the local level in collaboration with the Consortia.
- Reform Area IV, A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce:
 - **Curricula Development for Higher Education**
Facilitate and coordinate unit-based course alignment for three child development content areas: infant/toddler, children with special needs, and program administration.
 - **Program Administration Scale (PAS)/Business Administration Scale (BAS) Training**
Provide “train-the-trainer” instruction on PAS and BAS tools to Director Mentors and Family Child Care Home Mentors to support administrative technical assistance to centers and family child care homes participating in local QRISs.

- Reform Area V, Measuring Outcomes and Progress:
 - **Connecting Kindergarten Entry Data**
Ensure Kindergarten entry assessment information, namely the Desired Results Developmental Profile – School Readiness (DRDP-SR) results, can be connected to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).

The end goal that unites the Consortia and the State's one-time investment activities is to ensure children in California have access to high-quality programs so that they thrive in their early learning settings and succeed in kindergarten and beyond.