

Race to the Top— Early Learning Challenge Grant Competition An Overview



Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee
December 6, 2011



Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Grant Competition

- ◆ Joint initiative
 - US Department of Health and Human Services
 - US Department of Education
- ◆ \$500 million
 - NC eligible for \$70 million
- ◆ Guidelines for competitive grants published late August



ELC Purpose

Challenges states to “build a **coordinated system** of early learning and development that ensures that many more children from low income families and disadvantaged children, from birth to age five, have **access to dramatically improved early learning and development programs** and are able to **start kindergarten with a strong foundation** for future learning.”



ELC Focus

- ◆ Bold action to improve early learning and development
- ◆ Intent to “fund applications that demonstrate a State’s commitment and capacity to build a statewide system that raises the quality of early learning and development programs so that all children receive the support they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.”



North Carolina's Response

- ◆ Extraordinary opportunity to build upon history of pioneering and model work in the field
- ◆ Potential to create a transformative system of services to help assure that every child has the chance to come to school ready to succeed



NC's Grant Development Process

- ◆ Governor assigned responsibility for development to the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
- ◆ Core team of ECAC members led effort
- ◆ Held meeting of stakeholders
- ◆ Received statements of support statewide
- ◆ Application for grant of \$69,991,121 submitted Oct. 19



NC's Reform Agenda For Success

- ◆ Build on achievements
- ◆ Overarching goal: Each and every child ready for success in school and life
- ◆ Focus on
 - Outcomes
 - Shared accountability
- ◆ Supported by integrated data system with information that is
 - Timely
 - Useful for planning
- ◆ Grounded in research-based knowledge
 - Child development
 - Effective implementation practices
- ◆ Comprehensive system of services
 - Early learning and development
 - Health care and social-emotional development
 - Family strengthening
- ◆ Begin at the beginning, assuring infants and toddlers have best possible start
- ◆ Provide access to a continuum of appropriate and high-quality services through early years



Current Status

- ◆ 37 applications now under review
- ◆ Successful proposals announced mid-December
- ◆ Awards made for 4-year grant period by Dec. 31



About NC's Proposal

- ◆ Scoring rubric precise and prescriptive
- ◆ Application centers on strategies, projects, activities deemed
 - most responsive to precise and prescriptive scoring rubric
 - most likely to yield dramatically improved results
- ◆ Focuses on
 - long-term capacity building
 - one-time investments for ongoing benefit



ELC Priorities

- ◆ Absolute priority
 - “promoting school readiness for children with high needs”
- ◆ Competitive priorities
 - Including all early learning and development programs in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
 - Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten
- ◆ Invitational priorities
 - Sustaining program effects in the early elementary grades
 - Encouraging private sector support



ELC Selection Criteria

- ◆ Successful state systems
 - Past commitment to early learning and development
 - The state's rationale for its reform agenda and goals
 - Alignment and coordination of early learning and development across the state
 - Budget
- ◆ High-quality, accountable programs
 - QRIS based on common tiered program standards
 - Participation in the QRIS
 - Rating and monitoring programs
 - Validating the QRIS
- ◆ Promoting early learning and development outcomes for children
 - Statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards
 - Comprehensive assessment systems
 - Health, behavioral, and developmental needs
 - Engaging and supporting families
- ◆ Strengthening the early childhood education workforce
 - Common, statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework
 - Workforce knowledge, skills, and abilities
- ◆ Measuring outcomes and progress
 - Kindergarten entry assessment
 - Early learning integrated data system



NC's Application

Overarching Strategies

- ◆ Strengthen standards, assessment, and the capacity to collect data to drive program quality and continuous improvement
- ◆ Invest in people and relationships to increase teacher and system effectiveness and sustain change
- ◆ Target high-intensity supports and community infrastructure-building efforts to turn around poor outcomes for young children in the state's highest-need counties



NC's Application

Transformation Zone Strategy

- ◆ Focus intensive effort in selected high-need counties in northeastern North Carolina
- ◆ Provide comprehensive set of services and supports offered when and where needed and to the appropriate degree needed
- ◆ Help achieve dramatically improved outcomes for all young children
- ◆ Lessons learned through concentrated approach used to
 - hone early childhood strategies
 - improve outcomes for young children across the state



NC's Application

Focus of Major Projects And Activities

- ◆ Promoting Use of High-Quality Early Learning and Development (ELD) Standards
- ◆ Increased Access to High-Quality ELD Programs
- ◆ Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) Enhancement
- ◆ K-3 Assessment
- ◆ Integrated Data System
- ◆ Family Engagement
- ◆ Meeting Health Needs
- ◆ Supporting a High-Quality Workforce
- ◆ Enhanced and Specialized Professional Development
- ◆ Transformation Zone Strategy



NC's Implementation Plan

- ◆ Lead agency: Early Childhood Advisory Council
- ◆ Participating State Agencies with responsibility for various projects:
 - Division of Child Development and Early Education
 - Division of Public Health
 - Department of Public Instruction, Office of Early Learning
- ◆ Additional aspects of program carried out through contracts and MOUs with other state and local agencies and organizations



NC's Application

Allocations By Agency

- ◆ Early Childhood Advisory Council: \$25,721,433
- ◆ Division of Child Development and Early Education: \$26,510,427
- ◆ Division of Public Health: \$5,989,460
- ◆ Office of Early Learning, Department of Public Instruction: \$11,769,801

