

# Colorado



**KINDERGARTEN READINESS IS A MAJOR** milestone in a child's path to success, but in Colorado it is estimated that this year at least 16,000 children arrived in classrooms unprepared to keep pace with their peers. Increasing kindergarten readiness is one of Colorado's top priorities. To accomplish this goal, Colorado's most at-risk children must have access to the kinds of high-quality early learning programs that will give them a solid start. Colorado's public, private, and philanthropic sectors are investing in the people, programs, and places that will increase access to high-quality early experiences.

Guided by the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*—its vision, goals, and priorities for a unified system across early learning, family support and parent education, and physical and social-emotional health—Colorado has continued to make gains for young children and families. The RTT-ELC grant will help maximize a broader, coordinated set of state and local early childhood efforts supported by foundations, private companies, and the state.

The following are the major activities of this Phase 2 grant application, by selection criteria, and their anticipated impact on overall statewide reform:

## **A. Successful State Systems**

- Grant management and coordination, supported by the new Office of Early Childhood
- Communication to families, especially those with high needs, on all aspects of quality, including the Early Learning and Development Guidelines, the tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS), and statewide online resources to increase ease of access to high-quality programs
- Supports to local early childhood councils to provide flexible, responsive support of grant activities at the local level

## **Applicant**

Office of the Governor,  
State of Colorado

## **Lead Agency**

Colorado Department of  
Human Services

## **Contact Information**

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## **Total Federal Award**

\$44,888,832

## **Grant Period**

January 1, 2013 –  
December 31, 2016

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) discretionary grant program supports states in building statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Information in this abstract is drawn from the state's RTT-ELC grant application.

- Grant evaluation per federal specifications

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

- Statewide implementation of the new TQRIS tied to licensing
- Training and communication to programs and providers on the new TQRIS
- Supports to increase quality, including local supports for shared services, especially for high need programs
- Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) development, including access and reporting for families, providers, and administrators

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

- Development and dissemination of user-appropriate tools for programs, providers, and families
- Incorporation of Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG) into the TQRIS, training and professional development, assessment training, and communications to communities and families

**D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce**

- Unify the state workforce competency system
- Align teacher preparation programs (2-year and 4-year) around workforce competencies and promote articulation of coursework across all institutions
- Incorporate competencies into statewide professional development opportunities
- Develop measurements for competencies in order to give credit for prior learning
- Provide incentives and supports to advance through the ladder of competencies, especially for high need providers
- Fully deploy a statewide Learning Management System to advance professional development opportunities to the early childhood education workforce

**E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

- Tiered expansion of the Results Matter program to serve more children with high needs from birth through 5 years of age.
- Implement kindergarten assessment in all school districts statewide

Throughout the proposed work are two emphases: (1) the development of data systems and increased data sharing across programs and departments for continuous quality improvement, and (2) an increased emphasis on educating and empowering

families so they can best support the optimal development of their children and become effective advocates when needed. Starting with the new Office of Early Childhood, through smarter management of grant activities and a new emphasis on empowering and educating families, these efforts will constitute a comprehensive evolution in the state's push for high-quality early learning programs.

Together, these accomplishments will enable Colorado to achieve significant increases in overall kindergarten readiness, as well as major decreases in the gap in readiness between children with high needs and their peers.