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Preschool Development Grants (FY2014-FY2016) and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants (FY2011-FY2013)

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Summary

The importance of children's early learning experiences to their development and later success in school and the workforce has become a subject of increasing interest to the public, Members of Congress, and the Administration. During recent congresses many bills have been introduced that would provide funding to states aiming to facilitate improvements in the quality of, and access to, early childhood education (ECE) programs.

This report focuses on two early childhood initiatives—Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants for FY2011-FY2013 and Preschool Development Grants (PDG) for FY2014-FY2016. Both programs have been administered jointly by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In addition to background and information on these programs, the report provides data on states that received grants under one or both of these programs.

Through the RTT-ELC program, ED and HHS awarded three rounds of RTT-ELC grants in December 2011 ($500 million), 2012 ($133 million), and 2013 ($370 million). Nine states received RTT-ELC grants in 2011 (Phase 1), five states in 2012 (Phase 2), and six states in 2013 (Phase 3). These grants were broadly focused on building comprehensive statewide systems to support high-quality preschool, as well as increasing access to preschool for high-need children.

The Obama Administration's proposed PDG program was intended to build on the RTT-ELC grants program to accomplish similar goals. For FY2014-FY2016, the PDG program focused specifically on expanding access to high-quality preschool for four-year-olds from low-income families.

The Administration requested $750 million in FY2014 and FY2016, and $500 million in FY2015 for the PDG program; the program received $250 million in each of the three years. According to the Administration's FY2016 budget request to Congress, higher funding for the PDG program would help lay the groundwork for the Administration's larger Preschool for All initiative—which was intended to provide high-quality preschool to all low- and moderate-income children.

Separately, the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95), enacted in December 2015, established a standalone authorization for a new PDG program. This new program has not yet been funded; FY2017 is the first year for which funding is authorized. This report is focused on the initial programs, as administered through FY2016. The new PDG program is generally beyond the scope of this report, though some additional information on it can be found in **Appendix C**.

On December 10, 2014, ED and HHS awarded PDG grants to 18 states from FY2014 funding. FY2015 and FY2016 funding allowed existing grantees to receive continuation awards but did not fund any new grantees. PGD grants were divided into two separate funding streams. States with fewer than 10% of their four-year-olds in state-funded preschool that had not received an RTT-ELC grant were eligible for PDG-Preschool Development Grants. Five states received these grants. States with more than 10% of their four-year-olds in state-funded preschool or that had received an RTT-ELC grant were eligible to apply for PDG-Preschool Expansion Grants. Thirteen states received these grants.

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Introduction

The importance of early learning for children's healthy development and positive outcomes in school and the workforce has become a subject of increasing interest to the public, Members of Congress, and the Administration. During recent congresses many bills have been introduced that would provide funding to states aiming to facilitate improvements in the quality of, and access to, early childhood education (ECE) programs.[1]

Increased congressional interest in early childhood care and education issues has been driven, in part, by research on the role of ECE programs in raising academic achievement and other desired student outcomes. Results have generally shown that quality early childhood care and education help improve outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students.[2] The effectiveness of ECE programs is usually measured by assessing children's cognitive functioning, school readiness, and/or social behavior.

In addition, there is a growing body of research exploring the cost-effectiveness of investments in high quality preschool.[3] The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) estimated the average lifetime benefits of universally available preschool for all three- and four-year-olds to be considerably larger than the costs for two years of prekindergarten. NIEER based its estimates on data from studies of two high quality preschool programs serving low-income children—the Chicago Child Parent Center (CCPC) and the Perry Preschool program. These studies both found that for every dollar invested, the lifetime return on investment equaled seven dollars. Follow-up of the children who participated in the CCPC at age 20 found they were less likely to be held back in school, to have needed remedial help, or to have been arrested. The follow-up study of the Perry Preschool participants found similar benefits. At age 27, Perry Preschool participants had higher monthly earnings and a higher level of schooling, as well as fewer arrests, than the children who did not take part in the program.[4]

Currently, access to high-quality preschool programs varies throughout the United States. Nationally, in school year (SY) 2014-2015, 42 states and Washington, DC, supported one or more state-funded preschool program, although the percentage of three- and four-year-olds served, and the number of hours provided by these programs, varied considerably.[5] In SY2014-2015, approximately 29% of four-year-olds and 5% of three-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded preschool nationally. One group that has established benchmarks for use in assessing program quality, NIEER, found that only six states met all 10 of their benchmarks for quality in SY2014-

[1] For a broader discussion of federal funding streams that may be used to support early childhood care and education, see CRS Report R40212, *Early Childhood Care and Education Programs: Background and Funding*, by Karen E. Lynch.

[2] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, *Hearing on ESEA Reauthorization: Early Childhood Education*, Testimony of Robert Pianta, 111th Cong., April 25, 2010.

[3] For example: Gregory Camilli et al., "Meta-analysis of the Effects of Early Education Interventions on Cognitive and Social Development," *Teachers College Record*, vol. 112, no. 3 (March 2010).

[4] NIEER estimated the costs and benefits with the assumption that preschool is provided through a combination of half-day, school-day and full-day programs. In estimating costs per child for universal care (in contrast to the CCPC and Perry Preschool programs which served only low-income children) the NIEER report estimates assumed the benefits for middle and high-income children would be lower. W. Steven Barnett, *Economic benefits of quality preschool education for America's 3 and 4 year olds*, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, NJ, 2010.

[5] W. Steven Barnett, Allison H. Friedman-Krauss, and Rebecca Gomez, et al., *The State of Preschool 2015: State Preschool Yearbook*, The National Institute for Early Education Research, New Brunswick, NJ, 2016, http://nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2015.

2015. Nationally, less than 4% of the children served in state-funded preschool in SY2014-2015 were enrolled in programs meeting all 10 of the NIEER benchmarks for quality.[6]

It is difficult to provide a clear picture of preschool programs in this country. There is no formal, federally mandated system of preschool, and states and localities make their own decisions about whether or not to offer such programs. In the absence of a cohesive public preschool system, a fragmented landscape of private and public providers has emerged, with funding coming from a combination of private, state, local, and federal sources, and with program eligibility and quality varying widely. In part, this fragmentation has led to a lack of comprehensive national data on the supply and quality of existing preschool initiatives and the rules that govern them.

Report Roadmap

This report focuses on two recent early childhood initiatives proposed by the Obama Administration and funded between FY2011 and FY2016: Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants and Preschool Development Grants (PDG).[7] These programs were intended to increase access to high-quality preschool and to help states develop more cohesive ECE systems that better coordinate local, state, and federal preschool programs. Appropriations laws for FY2011, FY2012, and FY2013 provided funds for RTT-ELC grants. Appropriations laws for FY2014, FY2015, and FY2016 provided funding for the Preschool Development Grants program. While funding for these programs is appropriated to the U.S. Department of Education (ED), these programs are jointly administered by ED and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

This report provides background and information on both the RTT-ELC and PDG programs, and on the states that have received a grant from one or both of these programs. Readers should note that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; P.L. 114-95) established a standalone authorization for a new PDG program beginning in FY2017. Despite the shared names, these two PDG programs differ in a number of ways. A full discussion of the new PDG program is beyond the scope of this report. However, some limited information on the newly authorized PDG program, as compared to the current PDG program, is provided in **Appendix C**.

Early Learning Challenge Grants

Program Goals

The overarching goal of the RTT-ELC program was to help states build comprehensive statewide systems that improve early learning programs, and increase access to high-quality ECE programs for high-need children. RTT-ELC is focused on five key areas that comprise this early learning reform agenda:

1. "*Successful State Systems* built on broad-based stakeholder participation and effective governance structures.

[6] The state programs meeting all 10 of NIEER's benchmarks for quality in SY2014-2015 were Alabama, Alaska, Mississippi, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. In addition, one Louisiana program (NSECD) met all the quality benchmarks. However, the number of children in the NSECD program was not reported separately from the total number of children enrolled in state preschool programs in Louisiana; therefore, only the statewide preschool programs were included in CRS calculations. State preschool profiles are available at http://nieer.org/yearbook.

[7] For a broader discussion of federal funding streams that may be used to support early childhood care and education, see CRS Report R40212, *Early Childhood Care and Education Programs: Background and Funding*, by Karen E. Lynch.

2. *High-Quality Accountable Programs* based on a common set of standards aligning Head Start, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), state-funded preschools, and similar programs to create a unified statewide system of early learning and development.
3. *Promoting Early Learning Development Outcomes for Children* through the implementation of common statewide standards for young children, comprehensive assessments aligned to those standards across a range of domains, and clear guidelines for improving the quality of programs and services that promote health and engage families in the care and education of young children.
4. *A Great Early Childhood Workforce* that is supported through professional development, career advancement opportunities, differentiated compensation, and incentives to improve knowledge, skills, and abilities to promote the learning and development of young children.
5. *Measuring Outcomes and Progress* through the collection, organization, and understanding of evidence of young children's progress across a range of domains, as well as implementing comprehensive data systems and using data to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies."[8]

Funding

Early Learning Challenge Grants were first considered by Congress during deliberations on the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009 (SAFRA, H.R. 3221 as passed by the House and referred to Senate Committee). This legislation included language that would have authorized a new Early Learning Challenge Grants program (ELC) to provide competitive grants to states intended to improve the standards and quality of state early learning programs serving children from birth to age five. One billion dollars a year in mandatory funding for FY2010-FY2017 was proposed for the program. Subsequently, some provisions from SAFRA, but not Early Learning Challenge Grants, were incorporated into Title II Part A of the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 (HCERA, P.L. 111-152).[9]

However, Early Learning Challenge Grants were funded through the Race to the Top program included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, P.L. 111-5). ARRA provided a total of $4.35 billion in FY2009 funding for the RTT program. ELC did not receive funding in FY2009, and no funding was provided for any RTT program in FY2010.[10] Nonetheless, ELC was subsequently provided RTT funding through appropriations measures in FY2011, FY2012, and

[8] See http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2013-early-learning-challenge-flyer.pdf.

[9] HCERA (P.L. 111-152) was signed into law by President Obama on March 30, 2010. For more information, see CRS Report R41127, *The SAFRA Act: Education Programs in the FY2010 Budget Reconciliation*, coordinated by Cassandria Dortch.

[10] The FY2010 Justification of Appropriations Estimates to the Congress submitted by the Obama Administration included, among other early childhood proposals, a request for $300 million in funding for a program titled the Early Learning Challenge Grant Fund. The President also proposed $500 million for ESEA Title I Early Childhood grants for states through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA; P.L. 111-5). The purpose of these grants was to encourage the wider use of these funds for preschool by providing formula funding to states to establish or expand high-quality preschool programs coordinated with existing ESEA Title I-A programs. The Early Learning Challenge Grant program was intended to work in concert with the proposed ESEA Title I Early Childhood Grants program. Neither program received any FY2010 funding. *FY 2010 Department of Education Justification of Appropriations Estimates to the Congress*.

FY2013; and the program became known as Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC)[11] grants. The final FY2011 Continuing Resolution (P.L. 112-10) provided $699 million for Race to the Top.[12] Section 1832 of P.L. 112-10 provided authority for ED to reserve (and administer jointly with HHS) a portion of RTT funding for competitive grants to states for the improvement of early childhood care and education. Of the $699 million provided for Race to the Top in FY2011, ED and HHS ultimately reserved $497 million for RTT-ELC funding. Through subsequent appropriations measures, the program received $133 million in FY2012 funding and $370 million in FY2013 funding (see **Table 1**).[13] FY2013 funding included supplements to six states in addition to six new awards.[14]

Table 1. Appropriations for the RTT-ELC Program

Fiscal Year, Phase of Grant	Funding (in millions)
2011, Phase 1	$497
2012, Phase 2	$133
2013, Phase 3	$370

Source: Table created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/funding.html.

State Requirements and Funding Priorities

Each state awarded RTT-ELC funding receives it for a four-year period, beginning the January after their grant award is announced. Certain state agencies are required to participate in the state's RTT-ELC program. State agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development and are participating in the RTT-ELC State Plan are considered by ED and HHS to be Required Participating State Agencies. Required Participating State Agencies include the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of the following: Section 619 of Part B and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);[15] the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program; state-funded preschool; home visiting; Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA); the Head Start State Collaboration Grant; and the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant. They also include the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, the state's Child Care Licensing Agency, and the state educational agency.

[11] The Race to the Top (RTT) program was originally authorized in FY2009 under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA; P.L. 111-5). Under the RTT program, competitive grants were awarded to states implementing K-12 reforms in four areas: (1) enhancing standards and assessments, (2) improving the collection and use of data, (3) increasing teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution, and (4) turning around struggling schools.

[12] This amount includes the across-the-board rescission of 0.2% required by P.L. 112-10.

[13] See http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/funding.html.

[14] The six states that received supplements were California and each of the five Phase 2 states, see **Table 3**. The six new Phase 3 states were Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont.

[15] Section 619 of Part B of the IDEA pertains to children with disabilities between the ages of three and five years old. For more information on Part B of the IDEA, see CRS Report R41833, *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B: Key Statutory and Regulatory Provisions*, by Kyrie E. Dragoo. Part C of the IDEA applies to children with disabilities from birth through age two. For more information on Part C of the IDEA, see CRS Report R43631, *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C: Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities*, by Kyrie E. Dragoo.

A state that obtains RTT-ELC funds is required to develop a tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for the early learning programs licensed and registered with the state that will be participating in the RTT-ELC program.[16] In the RTT-ELC grant program, QRIS are referred to as TQRIS to emphasize the tiered aspect of a Quality Rating and Improvement System. TQRISs are often compared to market-based approaches like star ratings for restaurants or hotels. A typical tiered TQRIS might display programs' ratings (e.g., from one to five stars) based on a number of factors such as child/staff ratios, staff experience, and state or national accreditation, allowing consumers to easily compare early learning programs in their area. The TQRIS used by RTT-ELC recipient states is required to be tiered, allowing consumers to determine the number of quality indicators an early learning program has met based on their tier level.

The first two RTT-ELC competitions included five proposed priorities: one absolute priority, two competitive preference priorities, and two invitational priorities. These priorities are listed in **Table 2**. The third competition added a competitive preference priority, for a total of six priorities. In order to receive RTT-ELC funding, a state must address in its application the absolute priority of promoting school readiness for children with high needs. Competitive preference priorities allow a state to receive extra points if it addresses the priority. States may address invitational priorities, but do not receive extra points for doing so. If a state chooses to address an invitational priority and wins RTT-ELC funding, it may use funds from the grant for the priority.

Before issuing applications for the first Phase of the RTT-ELC competition, ED issued draft requirements, priorities, selection criteria, and definitions in the *Federal Register*, and received nearly 350 comments on them. In response to the many comments, several changes were made to the Phase 1 RTT-ELC priorities when the Phase 1 application was released. For example, the draft executive summary of the RTT-ELC competition listed two proposed absolute priorities, but neither was used in its entirety in the Phase 1 priorities. Only one element of the proposed absolute priorities—the concept of promoting school readiness—was included in the Phase 1 absolute priorities. Other elements of the proposed absolute priorities were incorporated into the two competitive preference priorities issued in the Phase 1 competition. The two proposed invitational priorities were unchanged from the draft in the final RTT-ELC application. The proposed and final RTT-ELC funding priorities for each phase of the RTT-ELC competition are displayed in **Table 2**.

For the third round of the RTT-ELC grant competition, some language changes were made to existing criteria and some new provisions were added. Changes included a request for states to report data disaggregated by race and ethnicity on the program participation of children with high needs, and a revision of the Program Standards to require that strategies for engaging families be culturally and linguistically responsive and help families support their children's development and learning.[17] In addition, new language was added to indicate that Kindergarten Entry Assessments were not to be used as the sole measure for deciding to fire staff or to hold a student back (i.e., high stakes decisions). Invitational priority 4 from Phases 1 and 2, on preschool through third grade approaches to sustain early learning, was elevated to a competitive priority. A state could earn up to 10 points for this competitive priority. In order to meet this priority states were required to address preschool through third grade quality, alignment, and continuity of

[16] See the glossary in **Appendix A** for a more complete definition of TQRIS.

[17] EducationCouncil LLC, *Fiscal Year 2013 Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge: Template to Guide State Applications*, Early Learning Challenge Collaborative (ELCC), Washington, DC, September 4, 2013, http://www.elccollaborative.org/about/112-rtt-elc-2013-application-overview-and-template.html.

teaching and learning. A new competitive priority was also added for states to describe how they would address the unique needs of rural populations.

Table 2. RTT-ELC Funding Priorities

Priority	Proposed	Phase 1 & 2	Phase 3
Priority 1	Absolute Priority—Using Early Learning and Development Standards and Kindergarten Entry Assessments[a] to Promote School Readiness	Absolute Priority—Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs[a]	Absolute Priority—Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
Priority 2	Absolute Priority—Using Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems to Promote School Readiness	Competitive Preference Priority—Including All Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	Competitive Preference Priority—Including All Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
Priority 3	Competitive Preference Priority—Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	Competitive Preference Priority—Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	Competitive Preference Priority—Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry
Priority 4	Invitational Priority—Sustaining Program Effects in the Early Elementary Grades	Invitational Priority—Sustaining Program Effects in the Early Elementary Grades	Competitive Preference Priority—Creating Preschool Through Third Grade Approaches to Sustain Improved Early Learning Outcomes Through the Early Elementary Grades
Priority 5	Invitational Priority—Encouraging Private Sector Support	Invitational Priority—Encouraging Private Sector Support	Competitive Preference Priority—Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas
Priority 6	N/A	N/A	Invitational Priority—Encouraging Private-Sector Support.

Source: Table created by CRS using information available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applicant.html

a. Kindergarten Entry Assessments, Children with High Needs, and other terms used in the RTT-ELC grant competition are defined in the glossary of this report in **Appendix A**.

Resources for States

ED and HHS made a variety of resources available to states to help them develop and implement their RTT-ELC programs. They held training sessions and webinars for grantees, and are funding an Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center (ELCTA) that makes an array of resources available to states. Some of the activities, services, and publications ELCTA offers include the following:

- Needs Assessments and technical assistance (TA) Plans—strategic planning and analysis to identify and articulate specific TA needs.

- Communities of Practice—collaborative working groups, topic-based meetings, or conferences to solve problems and improve practice in an area that is important to the participants.
- Peer Exchange Networks—opportunities for grantees to communicate needs and learn from each other.
- Best Practice Guides, Toolkits, and Webinars—development of resources to support grantees and non-grantees.
- Onsite Technical Assistance—direct technical assistance provided to grantees.
- GRADS360° Public Domain Clearinghouse—one-stop portal which provides access to resources and knowledge to benefit grantees and non-grantees and is accessible by Early Learning Organizations who wish to share related resources.[18]

Additionally, there are a variety of private organizations supported by philanthropies that provide support on RTT-ELC to states. For example, BUILD and the First Five Years Fund jointly formed an Early Learning Challenge Collaborative (ELCC). The ELCC has provided support to states to assist them in applying for and implementing RTT-ELC.[19]

Grant Recipients

There have been three RTT-ELC competitions. Funding for these competitions, including state grant award amounts, is shown in **Table 3.**

Table 3. Funding and Recipients of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants

Competition	State Recipient and Grant Amount	
RTT-ELC Phase 1	California	$75,000,000
2012–2015	Delaware	$49,878,774
December 16, 2011	Maryland	$49,999,143
	Massachusetts	$50,000,000
	Minnesota	$44,858,313
	North Carolina	$69,991,121
	Ohio	$69,993,362
	Rhode Island	$50,000,000
	Washington	$60,000,000
	Subtotal, Phase 1	*$519,720,713*
RTT-ELC Phase 2	Colorado	$44,888,832
2013–2016	Illinois	$52,498,043

[18] See more about ELC TA at https://elc.grads360.org/#program.

[19] According to ELCC this work will "1. Cultivate a pool of outstanding state applications, 2. Support states with sophisticated, relevant and individualized technical assistance, consultation services and information, with a further emphasis on creating a learning community among participating states. 3. Promote quality and the development of a robust cross-sector early childhood system connected to education outcomes in all states. 4. Develop a coordinated federal policy and advocacy strategy to sustain funding and inform federal policy in this area, both short and long-term." The Early Learning Challenge Collaborative, http://www.elccollaborative.org/about.html.

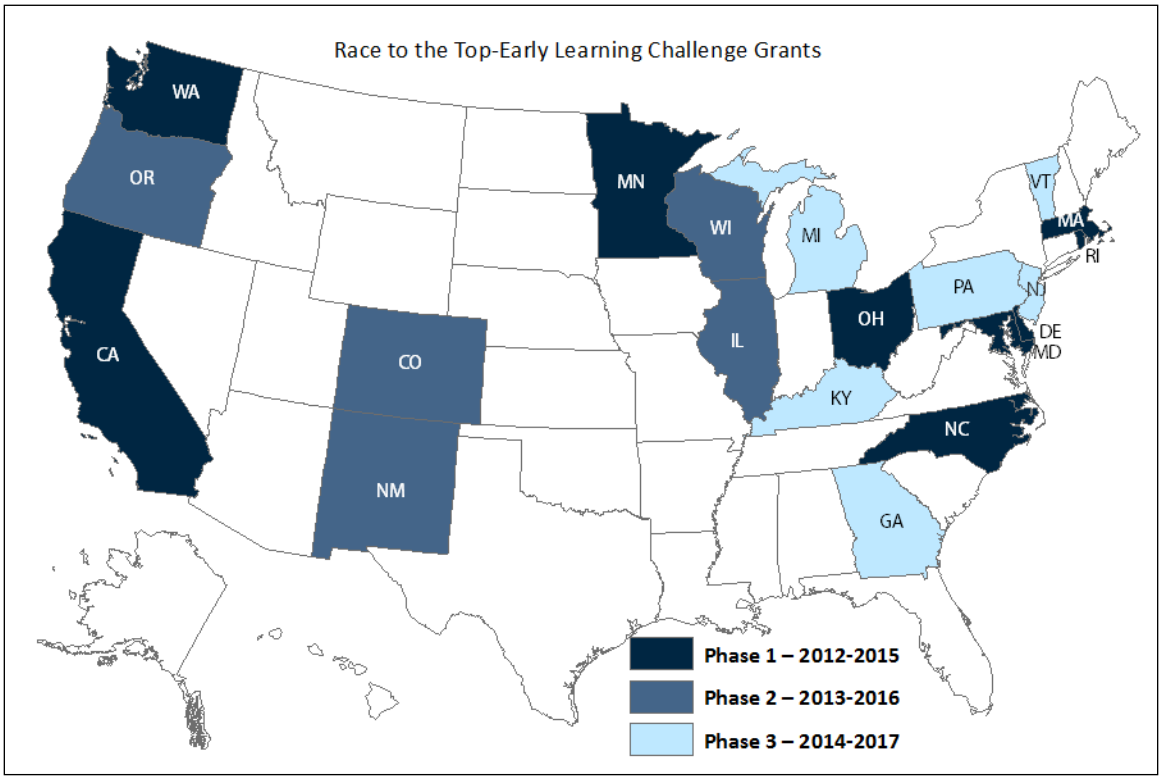
Competition	State Recipient and Grant Amount	
December 6, 2012	New Mexico	$37,500,000
	Oregon	$30,763,353
	Wisconsin	$34,052,084
	Subtotal, Phase 2	*$199,702,312*
RTT-ELC Phase 3	Georgia	$51,739,896
2014–2017	Kentucky	$44,348,482
December 19, 2013	Michigan	$51,737,456
	New Jersey	$44,286,728
	Pennsylvania	$51,734,519
	Vermont	$36,931,076
	Subtotal, Phase 3	*$280,778,157*[a]
	TOTAL	$1,000,201,182

Source: Table created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html.

Notes: $133 million of the final total of $200 million in Phase 2 funding was awarded in December of 2012. In December of 2013, an additional $67 million was awarded to the five Phase 2 RTT-ELC states and nearly $22 million was awarded to California bringing the Phase 2 states and California's RTT-ELC funding to the amounts displayed in this table.

a. The U.S. Department of Education reported that due to insufficient funds available to provide the full amount requested by the six highest-ranked applicants of RTT-ELC Phase 3, each grantee received 98.6% of its requested amount (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards.html).

Figure 1. Recipients of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants by State



Source: Figure created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html.

Phase 1

Thirty-five states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico developed proposals describing how they would improve early learning and development programs across their states if provided with RTT-ELC funding. The first Early Learning Challenge grants, totaling $500 million, were awarded to nine states[20] from the FY2011 RTT funding that ED reserved for the program.

Phase 2

FY2012 appropriations law (P.L. 112-74) provided $549 million for RTT overall. House report language (H.Rept. 112-331) indicated that funding from FY2012 appropriations for RTT was to include a "robust" early childhood component. ED and HHS ultimately reserved $200 million for RTT-ELC funding, which was awarded to five states in two blocks. In December 2012, $133 million was made available for awards to the five next highest scoring states after the Phase 1 winners. The following December, an additional $67 million in Phase 2 RTT-ELC grant funding was distributed to the five Phase 2 grantees. The Phase 2 winning states received approximately 75% or more of the possible points in the first round of the RTT-ELC competition.

The $133 million awarded to the Phase 2 winners in 2012 funded each state's application at 50% of its original FY2011 request level. These states were expected to adjust the scope of selected

[20] The FY2012 grant amount of $500 million is cited here, the amount of $520 million in **Table 3** represents the final amount granted to Phase 1 states, after California received a supplement in FY2014.

activities from their FY2011 applications to account for the difference between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 funding amounts. Adjustments to the scope of budgets, timelines, and performance measures of selected activities were allowed. In addition, states were not permitted to use Phase 2 RTT-ELC funding for activities other than those discussed in their original FY2011 proposals.

From FY2013 funding, an additional $89 million was awarded to the six grantees from Phases 1 and 2 whose grant requests had not been fully funded. The five Phase 2 grantees divided $67 million between them, and California (Phase 1) received approximately $22 million. The additional $67 million in funding for Phase 2 states brought the total funding for Phase 2 states to $200 million.

Phase 3

Total funding for RTT in FY2013 was $520 million. ED reserved $370 million for RTT-ELC.[21] RTT-ELC funding was later awarded to six new states and augmented grants for the six previous recipients whose grants had not been fully funded.[22] After supplementing the six previous recipients' grants, the final funding amount for Phase 3 states was $281 million.

Monitoring

ED and HHS share the responsibility for monitoring each state's progress in fulfilling its applicable RTT-ELC requirements, such as meeting its goals, timelines, budget requirements, and annual targets. Monitoring by ED and HHS includes reviews of grantee performance documentation and subgrantee monitoring plans, ongoing communications with each grantee, conference calls, and onsite reviews.

State grantees are responsible for monitoring localities, participating programs, and other partners, including community- and faith-based organizations that receive grant funds. A state is allowed, but is not required, to include "family, friend, and neighbor care," private, or faith-based early learning providers that do not accept federal funding in its RTT-ELC State Plan. If these groups are included in a state's RTT-ELC State Plan, they must be monitored like other subgrantees of the state's RTT-ELC funds. Grantees are required to submit plans, protocols, and schedules detailing how they will monitor subgrantees of RTT-ELC funds, within 180 calendar days from the beginning of their grant award.

Annual Performance Reports (APRs)

Beginning in 2013, the nine states awarded RTT-ELC funding in Phase 1 were required to submit annual performance reports (APRs) summarizing their RTT-ELC activities and progress in five reform areas during the previous calendar year. In 2014, the requirement continued with the Phase 2 states submitting their first APRs and the Phase 1 states submitting their second APRs. Here are a few self-reported accomplishments from the grantee reports that provide a sense of the focus of RTT-ELC activities:

- Maryland and Ohio have collaborated in the development of a Comprehensive Assessment System,
- California established a TQRIS with common tiers across Regional Consortia,

[21] See http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/funding.html.

[22] The five Phase 2 grantees plus California.

- Washington exceeded participation targets for its Early Achievers program, and
- Across the 20 states, there was a reported 85% increase[23] in early childhood programs participating in states' TQRISs between the time of their applications and the end of 2015. In addition, the 20 grantees reported that the number of programs rated in the top two tiers of their states' TQRISs more than doubled (i.e., increased 134%), from 9,025 programs to 21,114 programs.[24]

Preschool Development Grants

Program Goals

The primary focus of the PDG program is to expand access to high-quality preschool for low-income four-year-olds. The program is intended to support state and local efforts to build, develop and expand high quality preschool programs. In its FY2016 budget request, the Administration states that the PDG program will lay the groundwork to help ensure that states are ready to participate in the Administration's proposed Preschool for All program—which would make high-quality preschool programs available for all four-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families.[25]

The PDG program is subdivided into two grant programs: PDG-Expansion Grants and PDG-Development Grants. States with small or no State-funded preschool programs are eligible to apply for Development Grants. States that have more robust state funded preschool programs or have received a RTT-ELC grant are eligible to apply for Expansion Grants. According to ED's factsheet on the program, "Preschool Development Grantees plan to:

- Create or expand high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities;
- Implement state-level infrastructure and quality improvements;
- Collaborate with selected programs and ensure strong partnerships between school districts and other early learning providers;
- Align preschool programs within a birth-through-third-grade continuum of services; and
- Create sustainable programs by coordinating existing early learning funds."[26]

Funding

In the FY2014 President's Budget, the Obama Administration requested $750 million in discretionary funding for the new PDG program, as well as $75 billion (over 10 years) in mandatory funding for a Preschool for All program that would provide high-quality public preschool to all low- and moderate-income three- and four-year-olds. No FY2014 funding was

[23] The number of participating programs increased from 31,321 to 54,157.

[24] U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *2015 Progress Update: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge*, Washington, DC, 2016, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/performance.html.

[25] In its FY2016 budget request the Administration has requested $75 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years for the Preschool for All program.

[26] U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *What Are Preschool Development Grants?*, Washington, DC, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/pdgfactsheet.pdf.

provided for the Preschool for All Program; however, report language accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) directed that all $250 million in FY2014 Race to the Top (RTT) funding be used for a PDG program.[27] The Administration subsequently requested $500 million in discretionary funding for PDG in FY2015 and $750 million in FY2016. Ultimately, annual appropriations laws provided $250 million in both FY2015 and FY2016 for PDG through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V-Part D of the Fund for the Improvement of Education. FY2015 and FY2016 funding allowed existing grantees to receive a continuation award but was not sufficient to fund new grantees.

Table 4. Appropriations for Preschool Development Grants

Fiscal Year	Funding (in millions)
2014	$250
2015	$250
2016	$250

Source: Table created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget16/16pbapt.pdf.

Notes: This table displays the total funding for PDG-Development Grants and PDG-Expansion grants combined.

State Requirements and Funding Priorities

PDG grants are awarded for a period of up to four years. In their application, states are required to specify their requested budget for the entire length of the grant. However, states receive funding on an annual basis; in order to continue receiving funds in subsequent years, states need to demonstrate "substantial progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the program."[28] Funding in subsequent years is also contingent on continued appropriations for the program.

The one required use of funds, what ED refers to as an "absolute priority," that ED has established for states applying for PDG-Development grants is that they develop and implement a plan to build capacity to deliver, and increase access to, high-quality preschool programs. See **Table 5** for a list of all the priorities that states applying for PDG–Development and PDG–Expansion grants must address. States are required to indicate in their application how they will (1) begin serving eligible children within the first two years after receiving a grant, (2) subgrant 65% of the funding to subgrantees for the implementation of high-quality preschool in one or more high-need areas in the state, and (3) use no more than 35% of funding for improving state preschool infrastructure and capacity to provide high-quality preschool at the state level.

ED's absolute priority that states applying for PDG-Expansion Grants must meet is a strategy to increase access to high-quality preschool programs in high-need areas. States are required to indicate in their application how they will meet the following requirements: (1) begin serving eligible children within one year of receiving the grant, (2) subgrant at least 95% of funding for the implementation of high-quality preschool programs in two or more high-need areas, and (3) use no more than 5% of funding for improving preschool infrastructure.

There are also three "competitive priorities" (applicable to both PDG-Development Grants and PDG-Expansion Grants), which represent allowable but not required uses of funds. For each

[27] P.L. 113-76, Division H, Title III, 128 STAT 391. See the Innovation and Improvement appropriations account.

[28] http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/2014faq-preschldev.pdf (See p. 4).

competitive priority a state may earn up to 10 points. These priorities are (1) the provision of state, local, and/or other nonfederal matching funds; (2) supporting a birth through grade 3 continuum; and (3) using 50% or more of funding to expand the number of available high-quality preschool slots. Seven selection criteria are used to rate state applications.[29]

Table 5. Preschool Development Grant Funding Priorities

Priority	Development Grants	Expansion grants
Priority 1	Absolute Priority—Building Capacity to Deliver, and Increasing Access to, High-Quality Preschool Programs.	Absolute Priority—Increasing Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in High-Need Communities.
Priority 2	Competitive Preference Priority—Contributing Matching Funds.	Competitive Preference Priority—Contributing Matching Funds.
Priority 3	Competitive Preference Priority—Supporting a Continuum of Early Learning and Development.	Competitive Preference Priority—Supporting a Continuum of Early Learning and Development.
Priority 4	Competitive Preference Priority—Creating New High-Quality State Preschool Program Slots.	Competitive Preference Priority—Creating New High-Quality State Preschool Program Slots.

Source: Table created by CRS using information from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/applicant.html.

Subgrantees may use their funding for certain operational costs, including "staff salaries and benefits, instructional supplies, food, building operations and maintenance, in-service training and professional development, individualized accommodations and supports for eligible children with disabilities, Comprehensive Services, and program administration."[30]

The following early learning providers are eligible to apply for a subgrant under the program: "a local educational agency (LEA), charter school, educational service agency, Head Start program, licensed child care provider, municipality or other local government agency, tribe or Indian organization, institution of higher education, libraries and museums, and other eligible licensed providers as defined by the State, or a consortium thereof, if defined as such by the State."[31] Non-LEA subgrantees need to demonstrate that they have a strong partnership with the LEA(s) the preschoolers served by the program will attend when they enter kindergarten.

All providers must offer preschool programs that meet the definition of a high-quality preschool program (see text box, below).

[29] For more information on priorities and selection criteria, see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/2014faq-preschldev.pdf.

[30] "Comprehensive Services include screenings and referrals, family engagement, nutrition services, coordinated early intervention services, physical activity services, family community services, on-site coordination of services, and additional support services determined by the state." See http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/2014faq-preschldev.pdf.

[31] http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/2014faq-preschldev.pdf (see pp. 10-11).

Definition of High-Quality Preschool Program

"High-Quality Preschool Program means an early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality, including at a minimum—

(a) High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternate pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;

(b) High-quality professional development for all staff;

(c) A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;

(d) A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications as outlined in paragraph (a) of this definition;

(e) A Full-Day program;

(f) Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;

(g) Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;

(h) Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;

(i) Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;

(j) Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;

(k) On-site or accessible comprehensive services for children and community partnerships that promote families' access to services that support their children's learning and development; and

(l) Evidence-based health and safety standards."[32]

Grant Recipients

In FY2014, FY2015, and FY2016, $250 million was appropriated for the PDG program. On December 10, 2014, ED and HHS announced that 18 of the 36 states and outlying areas that applied for a PDG grant would receive FY2014 funding.[33] FY2015 and FY2016 funding allowed existing grantees to receive continuation awards. Appropriations were not sufficient to fund new grantees. The maximum funding available for each state is based on its population of four-year-olds living in families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, and only these children may be served by the PDG program.

Of the $250 million in FY2014 funding for PDG, $80 million was reserved for PDG-Development Grants and $170 million was reserved for PDG-Expansion Grants. Remaining funds were reserved for national activities and for peer review of state applications. Eight states and Puerto Rico submitted applications for PDG-Development Grants.[34] As has been noted, PDG-Development Grants are designed for states with fewer than 10% of their four-year-olds in state-funded preschool that have not received a RTT-ELC grant. As **Table 6** shows, in 2014, five states were awarded these grants. PDG-Preschool Expansion Grants are designed for states that already

[32] http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/executivesummary-419a.pdf (See pp. 20-21).

[33] See ED's announcement of PDG applicants at http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/35-states-and-puerto-rico-submit-applications-new-preschool-development-grants-c. ED's announcement of PDG grant winners is at http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/18-states-awarded-new-preschool-development-grants-increase-access-high-quality-?src=rotator.

[34] In addition to Puerto Rico, applications were received from Alabama, Arizona, Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and New Hampshire.

serve 10% or more of their four-year-olds in state-funded preschools or received a RTT-ELC grant.[35] Twenty-seven states submitted applications for these grants and 13 states received them. The amount of funding awarded to each state in Year 1 (FY2017) and Year 2 (FY2015) of the program is provided in **Table 6**.

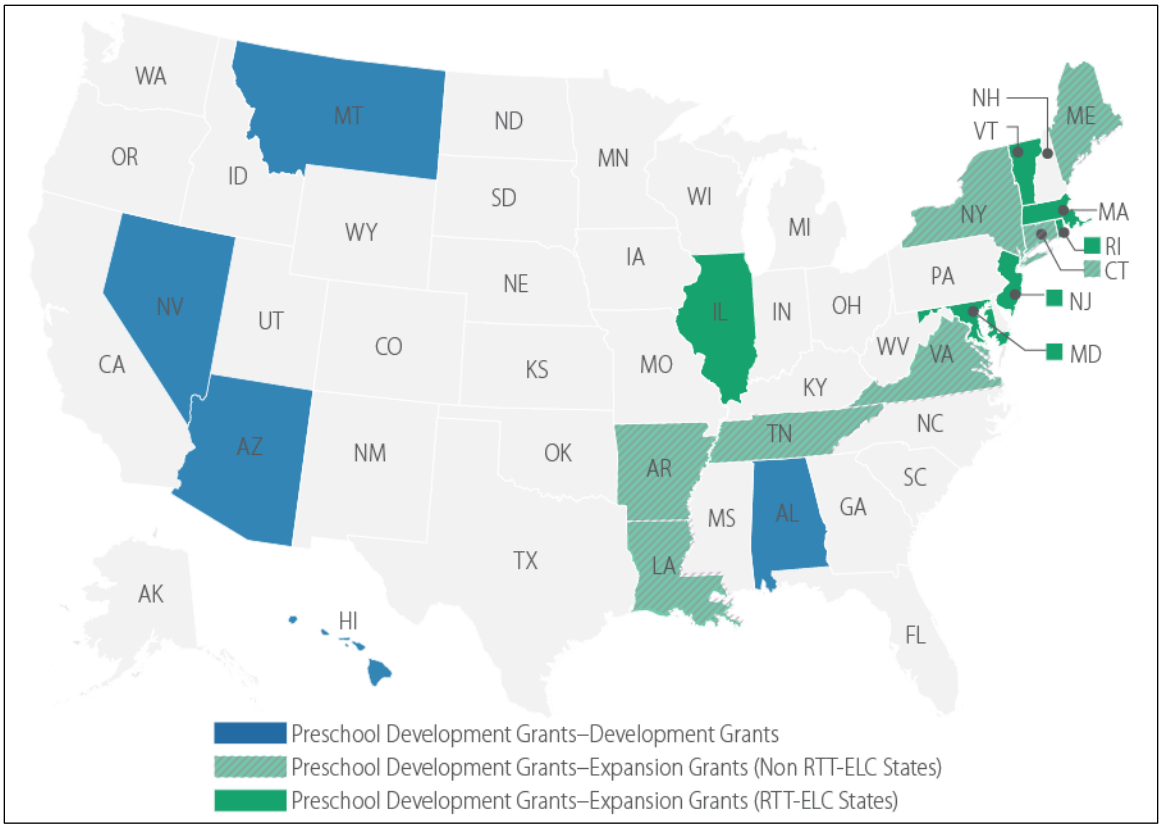
Table 6. Funding and Recipients of Preschool Development Grants

Competition	State Recipient	FY2014 Grant Amount	FY2015 Grant Amount
PDG–Development Grants	Alabama	$17,500,000	$17,500,000
	Arizona	$20,000,000	$20,000,000
	Hawaii	$2,074,059	$2,209,981
	Montana	$10,000,000	$10,000,000
	Nevada	$6,405,860	$11,031,983
	Subtotal	*$55,979,919*	*$60,741,964*
PDG–Expansion Grants	Arkansas	$14,993,000	$14,993,000
	Connecticut	$12,499,000	$11,689,109
	Illinois	$20,000,000	$20,000,000
	Louisiana	$2,437,982	$7,127,889
	Maine	$3,497,319	$4,204,720
	Maryland	$15,000,000	$15,000,000
	Massachusetts	$15,000,000	$15,000,000
	New Jersey	$17,498,115	$17,498,109
	New York	$24,991,372	$22,512,886
	Rhode Island	$2,290,840	$5,773,871
	Tennessee	$17,500,000	$17,399,566
	Vermont	$7,231,681	$8,009,167
	Virginia	$17,500,000	$17,500,000
	Subtotal	*$170,439,309*	*$176,708,317*
All PDG	TOTAL	$226,419,228	$237,450,281

Source: Table created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html.

[35] States submitting applications were Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.

Figure 2. Recipients of Preschool Development Grants by State, FY2014-FY2016



Source: Figure created by CRS based on information from the U.S. Department of Education available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/pdgfactsheet.pdf.

Monitoring

Recipients of PDG awards must submit an annual report to ED that describes the state's progress in achieving its goals, meeting its timelines, and staying within its requested budget. In addition, for each of the state's performance measures, it must indicate how its performance compares to the annual targets it established in its application.

States are accountable for meeting the goals, timelines, budgets, and targets that they establish in their application. ED reviews a state's adherence to these commitments on a regular basis. If a state or its subgrantee does not meet the requirements that accompany acceptance of a grant, ED and HHS may take enforcement actions that can include withholding or suspending funds or recovering funds as the result of an audit.[36]

[36] *Preschool Development Grants: FY2014 Competition*, U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington DC, October 3, 2014.

Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

Absolute Priority: A term used by ED and HHS in the Notices Inviting Applications for all RTT-ELC and Preschool Development Grant competitions to denote a priority that all applications must meet in order to be considered for funding.

Children with High Needs: Children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from low-income families or are otherwise in need of special assistance or support. "Children with high needs" includes children with disabilities or developmental delays, English language learners, residents of "Indian lands," and children who are migrants, homeless, or in foster care. The single Absolute Priority that states applying for RTT-ELC grants were required to address was "Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs."

Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs): a valid and reliable measure aligned with a state's early learning development standards administered to children within the first few months of kindergarten covering the Essential Domains of School Readiness.[37] KEAs are part of the Core Reform Area: A Successful State System, one of two Core Reform Areas that RTT-ELC grantees are required to address in their annual performance reports.

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS): a systemic approach to assessing, improving, and communicating the levels of quality in early learning and development programs; sometimes described as being like a star-rating system for commercial products. According to the definition from the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System "consists of four components: (a) Tiered Program Standards with multiple rating categories that clearly and meaningfully differentiate program quality levels; (b) monitoring to evaluate program quality based on the Program Standards; (c) supports to help programs meet progressively higher standards (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial support); and (d) program quality ratings that are publically available; and includes a process for validating the system."[38]

Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework: a set of expectations laid out in the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications that describes what early childhood educators (including those working with children with disabilities and English learners) should know and be able to do. The Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, "at a minimum, (a) is evidence-based; (b) incorporates knowledge and application of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, child development, health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families; (c) includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children; (d) incorporates effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement; (e) includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors; and (f) incorporates feedback from experts at the State's postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators."[39]

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[37] The five Essential Domains of School Readiness as defined in the RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications are (1) language and literacy development, (2) cognition and general knowledge, (3) approaches toward learning, (4) physical well-being and motor development, and (5) social and emotional development.

[38] https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/08/26/2011-21756/applications-for-new-awards-race-to-the-top-early-learning-challenge#p-181.

[39] This definition is from the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications and is identical across the three ELC Phases. See 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications at 53571, http://www.federalregister.gov/a/2011-21756/p-182.

Appendix B. Acronyms Used in this Report

APPE	Average Per Pupil Expenditure
APR	Annual Performance Report
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
CCDF	Child Care and Development Fund
ED	U.S. Department of Education
ELAC	Early Learning Advisory Council
ELCC	Early Learning Challenge Collaborative
ELCTA	Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
HCERA	Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
IDEA	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
LEA	Local Educational Agency
NIEER	National Institute for Early Education Research
PDG	Preschool Development Grants
RTT	Race to the Top
RTT-ELC	Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge
SAFRA	Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009
SEA	State Education Agency
SY	School Year
SPP	State Performance Plan
TA	Technical Assistance
TQRIS	Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Appendix C. Differences between PDG Programs

On December 10, 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was comprehensively reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; P.L. 114-95).[40] The ESSA includes a standalone authorization for a new Preschool Development Grant program that differs in a number of ways from the predecessor PDG program that has been in place for FY2014-FY2016.[41] **Table C-1** provides a comparison of different aspects of the two PDG programs.

Table C-1. Comparison of Preschool Development Grants Programs

Program Characteristic	Predecessor PDG Program FY2014-FY2016	Newly Authorized PDG Program
Administration	Based at ED, but administered jointly with HHS.	Based at HHS, but administered jointly with ED.
Authorization and appropriations	No standalone authorization; funded through appropriations in FY2014, FY2015, and FY2016,	The ESSA (P.L. 114-95) authorized $250 million to be appropriated to the Secretary of HHS for the PDG program for each of FY2017 through FY2020.
Proposed by	Funding first requested in the President's FY2014 budget request for the U.S. Department of Education.	Offered as an amendment to S. 1177 by Senator Patty Murray and Senator Johnny Isakson.[a]
Purposes	Annual appropriations acts stipulated that these funds were intended to build state capacity to develop, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs, including comprehensive services and family engagement, for preschool-aged children from families at or below 200% of the federal poverty line.	Broad-based purposes focused on improving coordination, collaboration, and alignment of existing federal, state, local, and nongovernmental early childhood programs, while maximizing parental choice in a mixed-delivery system.

[40] For more information on the ESSA, see CRS Report R44297, *Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Highlights of the Every Student Succeeds Act*, by Rebecca R. Skinner and Jeffrey J. Kuenzi.

[41] P.L. 114-95, Title IX, Part B, Sec. 9212.

Types of grants	Divided into two components: (1) Development Grants help states with limited or no state-funded preschool to build the necessary capacity to establish high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities; and (2) Expansion Grants support states with existing capacity in expanding access to high-quality programs in high-need communities.	Two types of grants: (1) Planning Grants will support statewide needs assessments, strategic plans for coordination and partnership-building, family involvement and knowledge of options, sharing of best practices, and quality improvement activities; (2) Renewal Grants will focus on improving overall program quality and expanding access to programs in a mixed-delivery system, including access for children who are eligible for, but not currently served by, existing early childhood programs.
Federal definitions & criteria	Annual appropriations acts required all grant recipients to develop and/or expand access to "high-quality preschool programs."[b] ED and HHS established a federal definition for a high-quality preschool program that includes elements such as full-day programs, class-size restrictions, child-to-instructional staff ratios, staff qualifications (including a bachelor's degree for some teachers), and instructional staff salary guidelines.	The law stipulates that HHS and ED may not establish any requirements related to the length of program day or year; specific measures or indicators of quality early learning and care (including a federal definition of "high-quality"); class sizes and ratios of children to instructional staff; and teacher and staff qualifications and salaries.[c]

Source: Prepared by CRS.

a. The program's name was changed to Preschool Development Grants in P.L. 114-95. When originally offered as an amendment to S. 1177, the program was called "Early Learning Alignment and Improvement Grants."

b. The full definition of High-Quality Preschool Program used by the predecessor PDG program is provided in the text box in the "State Requirements and Funding Priorities" section of this report.

c. P.L. 114-95 §9212(i).

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