

California Department of Education

**Report to the Governor, the Legislature, and
the Legislative Analyst's Office:**

California's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant Report



Prepared by:

**Early Education and Support Division
Instruction and Learning Support Branch**

May 2015

Description: Legislative Report on Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant

Authority: Item 6110-200-0890, Provision 2 of the Budget Act of 2014

Recipient: The Governor, the Legislature, and the Legislative Analyst's Office

Due Date: May 1, 2015

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Report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Legislative Analyst's Office: California's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant Report

Executive Summary

This report is required by Item 6110-200-0890, Provision 2 of the Budget Act of 2014. The California Department of Education (CDE) is required to submit a report to the fiscal committees of the Legislature and the Governor's Administration on the state and local activities undertaken with the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant funds each year.

This report provides an update on the 2014 federal RTT-ELC grant activities in California. The objective of RTT-ELC is to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs. 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 was a successful competitor and received a grant of \$75 million over four years (January 2012 through December 2015). California is implementing a unique approach that builds upon local and statewide successes to create sustainable capacity at the local level and address the geographic and cultural diversity of the state. To achieve its ambitious goal, California is using the majority of the funding to support the development and expansion of successful local quality improvement efforts led by a voluntary network of 17 Regional Leadership Consortia (Consortia) in 16 counties that are operating or developing a local Quality Rating and Improvement System or quality improvement system and allocating local resources to the efforts.

In addition, California is using a portion of the RTT-ELC grant funds to make several one-time investments in state capacity via 10 projects. These investments support the major RTT-ELC reform areas and provide additional resources for the Consortia and the state as a whole. During the four-year grant period, the CDE will be the RTT-ELC lead agency for California.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Cecelia Fisher-Dahms, Education Administrator, Early Education and Support Division, by phone at 916-324-9739 or by e-mail at cfisherd@cde.ca.gov.

You will find this report on the CDE RTT-ELC Legislative Reports Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/rttelclegreports.asp>. If you need a copy of this report, please contact Kim Taniguchi, Associate Governmental Program Analyst, Early Education and Support Division, by phone at 916-323-1301 or by e-mail at ktaniguchi@cde.ca.gov.

California's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant Report

Introduction

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 wide school readiness gap, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (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. California requested \$100 million and originally was awarded \$52.6 million. In July 2013, additional federal money was released for a second round of RTT-ELC grants. At that time, California received a supplemental award of \$22.4 million, bringing the total award amount to \$75 million, the largest award of any state. The California Department of Education (CDE) is the RTT-ELC lead agency, which is responsible for overall grant administration and project monitoring. Staff members from the CDE Early Education and Support Division (EESD) (formerly called the Child Development Division) and First 5 California (F5CA) serve as the RTT-ELC Implementation Team that provides workgroup and meeting planning and facilitation, technical assistance (TA) and support, and fiscal and programmatic oversight to 17 Regional Leadership Consortia (Consortia).

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

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 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.

To address this 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 grant 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 to age five) with a focus on those with the highest needs. As directed and approved by the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, California's plan supports a locally driven quality improvement process that

builds upon existing local and statewide successes and investment 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-level consortium¹ is led by an established organization already operating or developing a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The local QRIS model has three common tiers across the Consortia. The federal application defines a Tiered QRIS (TQRIS) as:

The system through which the State uses a set of progressively higher Program Standards to evaluate the quality of an Early Learning and Development Program and to support program improvement. 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.

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 2.3 million, which represents almost 95 percent of the total birth to age five children in California.

In addition, California is using a portion of the RTT-ELC grant funds to make several one-time investments in state capacity. The RTT-ELC projects are in four of the five key reform areas and include:

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
Reform Area II: High-Quality, Accountable Programs			
17 Local TQRIS Lead Agencies (\$57,566,270)	Regional Leadership Consortia	Implement a locally driven approach that builds upon current quality improvement efforts and investments, brings together organizations in their regions with	All 17 conducting ratings based on the hybrid rating matrix and providing quality improvement activities, e.g., coaching, utilizing the Continuous

¹ Lower case “consortium” or “consortia” is used when referring to a single county QRIS consortium or several, but not the entire Regional Leadership Consortia, which is when “Consortia” is used.

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
		the same goal of improving the quality of early learning, and expands their current areas of impact by inviting other programs to join their local QRIS or by reaching out to mentor other communities.	Quality Improvement Pathways Tools and Resources.
California Department of Social Services (CDSS) (\$1,000,000)	Enhancement of the CDSS Community Care Licensing (CCL) Web site	Enhance the CDSS CCL Web site to include educational and training materials for consumers (families) and child care providers.	Work began in 2015 to develop 25 modules.
American Institutes of Research (\$4,985,325)	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.	The evaluation began January 2014. Mid-term Validation Report was submitted Spring 2015.
First 5 California (\$1,326,989)	Inter-rater Reliability Assessment Management System	Ensure that assessors in each consortium have met a common level of reliability on the QRIS rating tools. This contract	Assessor Management Workgroup functioning. Three master anchors hired.

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
		will support each consortium to have a comprehensive system for rating and monitoring by providing increased support for assessments, cross-Consortia reliability training, and Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) and Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessors.	
Reform Area III: Promoting Early Learning Development Outcomes for Children			
WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies (\$778,661)	Electronic Training Materials of Existing Content	Develop online overviews of the <i>California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations</i> and the <i>Preschool Learning Foundations</i> and their respective Frameworks and of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). Post on California Early Childhood Online (CECO).	CECO was launched the summer of 2013. Online overviews of the ERS tools in English and Spanish were made available on CECO with funding from F5CA. The CSEFEL Overview and 3 R's modules were added. 1,030 early childhood educators completed the overview module; 757 infant/toddler modules; and 2,166 preschool modules.
WestEd Center for	Developmental	Train Consortia	ASQ training

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
Early Intervention and Prevention (\$775,178)	Screening Tool Training and Distribution	members on the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and ASQ-Social Emotional and appropriate referral follow-up.	materials were provided based on a survey of needs. Additional ASQ training was provided with RTT-ELC supplemental funds. 196,644 children were screened.
WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies (\$3,238,816)	California Collaborative for the Social-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 a local consortium.	Online CCSEFEL overview was created and posted on CECO. Implementation sites in 10 of the 16 RTT-ELC counties are being supported. Cadre of trainers and coaches has been developed.
California Department of Developmental Services (\$1,000,000)	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development for Early Start	Coordinate 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.	Coordination with the Consortia continues. The California Statewide Screening Collaborative (CSSC) supported the development of an Early Care and Education (ECE) Provider Screening Toolkit.
California	Home Visiting	Provide training to	Completed in 2013.

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
Department of Public Health (CDPH) (\$690,000)		CDPH's local California Home Visiting Program (CHVP) staff on implementing the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) practices and on the "Three R's of Early Childhood: Relationships, Resilience, and Readiness" (Three R's) through online modules and Webinars.	A PITC Home Visiting Institute conducted. Online modules were developed and three webinars were conducted on the Three R's. In 2014 these modules were posted on CECO.
Reform Area IV: A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce			
Child Development Training Consortium (\$750,000)	Curricula Development for Higher Education	Expand the Early Learning core curricula at California Community Colleges by facilitating and coordinating unit-based course alignment for three child development content areas: infant/toddler, children with special needs, and program administration.	Faculty convened a series of meetings and identified coursework on infants and toddlers, children with special needs, and program administration. Alignment work is in progress.
California Early Childhood Mentor Program (\$24,000)	Program Administrative Scale (PAS) and the Business	Provide "train-the-trainer" instruction on PAS and BAS tools to Director	Completed in 2013. Director Mentors were trained on the PAS; large Family

Agency	Project	Objective	Status
	Administrative Scale (BAS) for California Mentors	Mentors and Family Child Care Home Mentors to support administrative TA to centers and family child care homes participating in the local QRISs.	Child Care Home Provider Mentors were trained on the BAS.
Reform Area V: Measuring Outcomes and Progress			
U.C. Berkeley Evaluation, Assessment, and Research (BEAR) Center (\$1,000,000)	Connecting Kindergarten Entry Data	Ensure that 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.	SSID link was established. Hosting the DRDP-SR results in the “cloud” using DRDPtech. Outreach to superintendents was conducted to support DRDP-SR adoption.

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

RTT-ELC Reform Area I: Successful State Systems

As required by the grant, California continues to demonstrate commitment to—and investment in—services for children, especially those with high needs. The goal is to have coordinated and streamlined services for children from birth to age five focusing on the needs of the whole child and their families. To achieve this goal, California created a governance structure that brought together the appropriate state agencies, local partners, and staff of the lead agency to ensure successful administration of the grant.

As the lead agency, the CDE EESD manages the overall grant administration and ensures all federal reporting requirements are met, such as monitoring all contracts related to grant projects and updating scopes of work. The EESD oversaw 11 contracts

or inter-agency agreements that enhanced the ability to strengthen the quality of local early learning and care programs.

In addition, the Implementation Team supported the work of the Integrated Action Team (IAT). The purpose of the IAT is to facilitate cross-agency and Consortia dialogue regarding issues related to implementation of QRIS that intersect with state policy, regulations, and law. The largest portion of the Implementation Team's work continues to be directed toward supporting the Consortia.

The Implementation Team also collaborates with the five Participating State Agencies (PSAs) and the State Board of Education for the purpose of streamlining and coordinating program services to children. The PSAs are (1) California Department of Developmental Services (CDDS) (2) the California Department of Social Services (CDSS); (3) the CDPH; (4) F5CA; and (5) the State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care (SAC). Each PSA continued their involvement in the RTT-ELC grant as defined in their scopes of work/Memorandum of Understanding. The CDSS amended its approach to implement its scope of work and is in the final stages of completing a contract to develop 25 interactive training modules for child care providers, which will commence in early 2015. The CDPH received direct support through two training projects for their California Home Visiting Program: The PITC and the Three R's. The CDE holds a contract with F5CA for inter-rated reliability. The main purpose of this contract is to provide assistance to the Consortia by:

- Training three state anchors to reliability;
- Having counties or regional anchors maintain reliability to state anchors; and,
- Training the CDE Field Services consultants to reliability as indicated in the Implementation Guide so that their ERS ratings can be used in local QRIS effective 2015–16.

In 2014, the SAC held three in-person meetings (January, June, and October) and one statewide teleconference (April). This Council was co-chaired by Pete Cervinka (Program Deputy Director, Benefits and Services, CDSS), and Debra McMannis (Director, EESD, CDE), now chaired by Mark Friedman. The SAC members represent a broad range of state and local agencies and organizations with a stake in the early childhood field, including education, social services, health and mental health, and higher education. One of the Governor's appointees also administers a RTT-ELC QRIS consortium and serves as a liaison between the SAC and the Consortia. Another appointee formerly administered a QRIS consortium and continues to provide a RTT-ELC perspective to the SAC.

The SAC agendas focused on various topics pertaining to the education and care of young children. The major discussions centered on: state and federal updates, emphasizing legislative, regulatory, and budget information; funding resources and reimbursement rates for state-contracted early learning and care programs; importance

of higher education; training a highly qualified professional staff to work in these programs; exploration of simplification of state and federal program administration for local programs; professional development needs of early learning and care staff; and information about the various new funding opportunities announced at the federal and state levels, such as the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, the federal Preschool Expansion Grant, and the state's QRIS Block Grant. In May 2014, the SAC sent a letter to Governor Brown offering early learning and care fiscal, administrative, and workforce input. The California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan released by the SAC in 2013 provided the foundation for the items addressed in the letter.

The SAC is an important communication conduit to convey RTT-ELC information and progress to other constituents involved in the administration of California's early learning and care programs. This communication message stresses the importance of continuous quality program improvement that results in children with high needs receiving quality learning and services to better prepare them for kindergarten and ultimately for life.

As part of developing a successful state system, California partnered with 17 leading regional organizations that were operating or developing a local QRIS or quality improvement system and utilizing their own resources to participate in this new opportunity for California. The Consortia includes the following:

California County	Administering Agency
Alameda County	First 5 Alameda
Contra Costa County	First 5 Contra Costa
El Dorado County	First 5 El Dorado
Fresno County	Fresno County Office of Education
Los Angeles County	Los Angeles County Office of Child Care
Los Angeles County	Los Angeles Universal Preschool
Merced County	Merced County Office of Education
Orange County	Orange County Office of Education
Sacramento County	Sacramento County Office of Education
San Diego County	First 5 San Diego
San Francisco County	First 5 San Francisco
San Joaquin County	First 5 San Joaquin
Santa Barbara County	First 5 Santa Barbara
Santa Clara County	First 5 Santa Clara
Santa Cruz County	First 5 Santa Cruz
Ventura County	First 5 Ventura
Yolo County	First 5 Yolo

With the supplemental funds awarded in 2013, the Implementation Team developed the policy and methodology for awarding these new funds in consultation and with the approval of the Governor's Office and Administration, specifically the Department of Finance and the State Board of Education. The supplemental funds were approved for use as follows: (1) additional funding to members of the Consortia that agreed to serve an increased number of children with high needs as stipulated by the Administration and

to reach out to actively mentor neighboring non-RTT-ELC counties (“mentees”); (2) increased funding for the independent evaluation; (3) allocated funding for the Inter-rater Reliability contract; (4) allocated funding to purchase additional developmental screening tools for use by Consortia providers; and (5) established authority for limited-term staff positions within EESD to support RTT-ELC implementation.

With the award of new funds to the members of the Consortia, the Implementation Team developed criteria and guidance for use of these funds; determining each consortium's funding allocations; reviewing and approving the Consortia revised action plans; and distributing revised Grant Award Notifications to the Consortia. These additional funds also support an additional 14 mentee counties to work toward achieving the goal of RTT-ELC in their respective counties.

California County: Mentee Administering Agency; Consortia Mentor(s)

Consortium Mentoring is a relationship-based process between colleagues in similar professional roles, with a RTT-ELC consortium serving as the mentor, using the TQRIS and California Quality Continuum Framework, their knowledge, and implementation skills, and providing guidance and technical assistance to the mentee. The purpose of Consortium mentoring is to increase a mentee-county’s capacity to develop and implement the TQRIS, utilizing the RTT-ELC hybrid rating matrix and the Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways tools and resources.

Mentee Administering Agency	Consortia Mentor(s)
Imperial: Imperial County Office of Education	Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura
Kern: Early Childhood Council of Kern	Fresno
Kings: Kings County Office of Education	Fresno
Madera: Merced County Office of Education	Merced
Mariposa: Merced County Office of Education	Merced
Nevada: Placer County Office of Education	El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo
Placer: Placer County Office of Education	El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo
Riverside: First 5 Riverside	Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura
San Bernardino: First 5 San Bernardino	Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura
San Luis Obispo: Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County	Santa Barbara
San Mateo: First 5 San Mateo and San Mateo County office of Education	Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz

Sierra: Placer County Office of Education	El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo
Stanislaus: Stanislaus County Office of Education	San Joaquin
Tulare: Tulare County Office of Education	Fresno

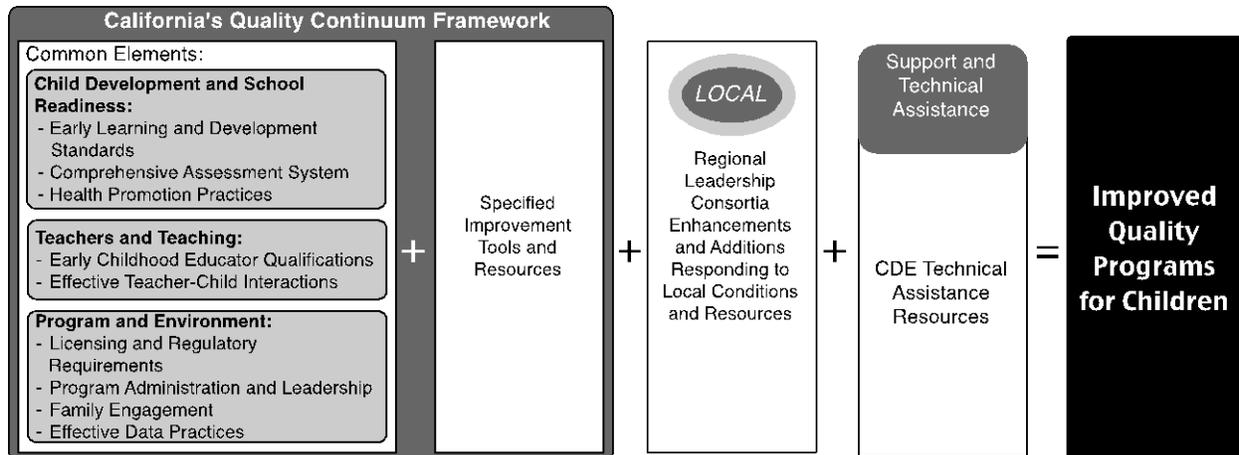
The funding approval also included the hiring of two consultant positions and one support position, all limited-term for the life of the grant, to complement the Implementation Team. The personnel paperwork was prepared and approved to establish these positions. They were advertised at the end of 2013 and were hired in 2014. Additionally, the CDE EESD hired one limited-term Office Technician. In addition, all of the necessary reports and budget information pertaining to the RTT-ELC Supplemental Award were submitted to the appropriate federal agencies.

RTT-ELC Reform Area II: High-Quality, Accountable Programs

As required in the federal application, California seeks to promote school readiness for children with high needs. More specifically, state applicants were directed to build systems that increase the quality of early learning and development programs for children with high needs so they enter kindergarten prepared to learn and succeed. The federal application directed that this be accomplished by integrating and aligning resources and policies across participating state agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide tiered QRIS. Note: California is implementing a local Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) model.

Quality Continuum Framework

To respond to the RTT-ELC application for a common TQRIS, California created the Quality Continuum Framework (see the left side on the chart below). California identified multiple research-based common elements of a high-quality QRIS and created this Framework that can be used by communities throughout the state. The Framework includes common, research-based elements, tools, and resources grouped into three core areas: (1) Child Development and School Readiness, (2) Teachers and Teaching, and (3) Program and Environment. This Framework is being implemented in the Consortia and mentees and is designed to both evaluate early learning programs based on scientific early childhood research and provide a quality improvement pathway.



This Framework is being implemented in the Consortia and is designed to both evaluate early learning programs based on scientific early childhood research and provide a quality improvement pathway.

Ratings were separated into seven elements in the three core areas:

1. Child Observation
2. Developmental and Health Screenings
3. Minimum Qualifications for Lead Teacher/Family Child Care Home (FCCH)
4. Effective Teacher-Child Interactions: CLASS Assessments
5. Ratios and Group Size
6. Program Environment Rating Scale
7. Director Qualifications

To meet California's diverse needs, the RTT-ELC grant implements a locally driven approach that builds upon existing quality improvement efforts and investments. After receiving the RTT-ELC grant award, California signed a federal assurance agreeing to implement a minimum of two common tiers across the Consortia. To ensure access and participation by all interested early learning programs, California's application stated that the base, or first tier, of each local system would start at California's Title 22 CDSS child care licensing standards. In its first year, the Consortia decided to develop two common tiers in addition to the entry tier, for a total of three common tiers. The QRIS of RTT-ELC Consortia includes the Three Common Tiers and two locally defined tiers for a total of five tiers. In sequence, California's structure is as follows:

- Tier 1 — Common (California's Title 22 CDSS licensing standards)
- Tier 2 — *Locally determined*
- Tier 3 — Common
- Tier 4 — Common
- Tier 5 — *Locally determined*

In order to ensure maximum flexibility and recognize diverse areas of quality, the Consortia ultimately developed and approved the RTT-ELC framework Consortia Hybrid Rating Matrix with Three Common Tiers (Hybrid Matrix or QRIS) in September 2012. The initial block rating system had up to 16 elements to be rated. The Consortia streamlined the elements/indicators for rating to focus on the “few and powerful” (5 to 7) and moved approximately half of the initial rated elements from the Framework out of the Hybrid Rating Matrix into the newly created corresponding Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways (Pathways).

The table below illustrates the elements and resources included in each core area in the QRIS.

Rated Elements/Indicators (in the Hybrid Matrix)	Quality Improvement and Professional Development Elements/Resources (in the Pathways)
CORE I: Child Development and School Readiness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Observational Assessments • Developmental and Health Screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant/Toddler and Preschool Learning Foundations and Curriculum Frameworks • California Collaborative for the Social-Emotional Foundations of Early Learning • Health and Nutrition (United States Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Food Program), physical education/activity, and tobacco cessation training
CORE II: Teachers and Teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Teacher/Family Child Care Homes Owner Education and Professional Development • Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Growth Plan • CLASS or PITC Program Assessment Rating Scale
CORE III: Program and Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Rating Scales (ERS) • Ratios and group size (Centers only) • Director Qualifications and professional development (Centers only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Administrative Scale or Business Administrative Scale • Family Engagement • Strengthening Families’ five protective factors

This streamlining allowed the Consortia to prioritize research-based tools that demonstrate improved child outcomes (e.g., the CLASS) and narrow the Hybrid Rating Matrix to include only seven rated elements for centers and five rated elements for family child care homes (FCCHs). By moving some of the elements into the Pathways, they then become part of the participating program’s quality improvement plan and each consortium’s continuous program improvement process rather than being rated items. This allows the Consortia to narrow the TQRIS focus on the “R” in the rating and still

have resources to dedicate to the corresponding “I” for improvement. The Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways, the companion document to the Rating Matrix, has remained unchanged throughout 2014. The Consortia reported that their coaches are using the document as a guide for continuous quality improvement and professional development at the site level.

The Consortia solicited local community feedback on the hybrid rating matrix by engaging them numerous times, which built consensus and support for the streamlined Three Common Tiers as well as the locally determined tiers. Many consortia stated their excitement with the end product and were pleased that local stakeholders could see their feedback reflected in the creation of a “more solid, practical QRIS.”

Local QRIS Implementation

Every consortium reported making significant progress in fully implementing their TQRIS and rating sites. The Consortia advanced their work in developing local TQRIS databases by engaging sites and conducting orientation sessions, completing program and classroom baseline assessments based on the TQRIS, broadening training and technical assistance, fully integrating local quality improvement and workforce development funding streams, and strengthening relationships with institutes of higher education to offer expanded course offerings.

Every consortium reported moving forward with their local RTT-ELC Action Plans, and most exceeded their targets in recruiting and rating sites in 2014. The total 2014 participation target for the Consortia was 1,672. That goal was exceeded by 33 percent as the actual participation target met was 2,144. Each consortium is continuing to engage programs that represent a cross section of the early learning community and prioritizing those serving children with high needs. In 2014, Consortia members also hired and trained coaches and project staff, or contracted with other entities, to carry out the training, observation, rating, evaluation, or coaching activities.

The Consortia members are proud of the strong participation in their community stakeholder meetings, focus groups, surveys, and planning team efforts, all of which allowed them to garner input on program elements and potential opportunities and impacts for their communities.

One consortium wrote:

In partnership with the Office of Child Care, a RTT-ELC Advisory Committee is convened quarterly with representatives from participating sites and key stakeholders such as Resource and Referral agencies, Community Care Licensing, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and parent advocates. The Advisory Committee provides guidance and expertise and assists with helping to raise public awareness about LA County RTT-ELC rating system. We have also been building on

existing networks in order to avoid duplication, by also providing regular updates and seek input from key stakeholders at various countywide meetings held across Los Angeles County on a regular basis. Such opportunities include the Los Angeles County Early Care and Education Workforce Consortium, County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development, Local Child Care Planning Committee, and First 5 LA Program and Planning Committee meetings.

Ongoing feedback continued to be a priority in 2014 as the Consortia sought input regarding implementation efforts, the Implementation Guide, the Pathways, and decisions brought back from the full Consortia meetings. The Consortia expressed that the ongoing full Consortia meetings and regional and/or local level meetings were extremely valuable. These meetings provided clarity from the state and federal governments, as well as an opportunity for consensus decisions by the Consortia. More importantly, the Consortia were able to share these communications with their local stakeholders, extending understanding and adoption at the local level.

The Consortia more fully established their advisory committees, made progress on communication and marketing, implemented data systems, and designed Web sites. In addition, the Consortia strengthened their partnerships and communication with Local Child Care and Development Planning Councils, school districts, and other CDE-funded quality improvement projects. The Consortia gave presentations at Family Child Care Networks, school districts, community colleges, and other community agencies to build awareness and provide updates about RTT-ELC and QRIS and strengthen their outreach efforts and support the work of the advisory committee. Several consortia implemented more formal advisory structures with subcommittees to work on strategic planning, quality improvement and recognition, efficient data systems, alignment, and other systems functions to ensure sustainability of RTT-ELC efforts. One consortium wrote, “We have fostered an effective partnership with the County Office of Education, the local Child Care Council, the R&R, and the three Community Colleges which has allowed for effective engagement of new sites, and ensured continued participation of existing programs.”

Five consortia developed a regional approach to RTT-ELC, which entails sharing a robust quality rating database system, a regional assessment protocol, a joint framework for a coaching model, and a common framework for the development of a common tool for a quality improvement plan.

Most significantly, over the course of the year, the Consortia conversations shifted from a focus on rating to a focus on continuous quality improvement. Quality improvement efforts focused on acquainting sites with the overall Rating Matrix and the tools associated with a TQRIS. A key accomplishment for many consortia was the hiring or contracting of coaches with early childhood education and experience, and ensuring these TA providers were adequately trained on the tools identified in the Framework.

The Consortia worked independently and collaboratively to develop continuous quality improvement plans for use with participating programs.

In total, the Consortia rated 1,808 sites and engaged 22,906 sites for full enrollment in 2014². Engaged programs included those sites participating in the QRIS at various levels of involvement, including programs receiving only quality improvement resources prior to a rating, those that have not yet completed rating activities, and those sites that have been fully rated. Sites engaged in the local QRIS include a variety of program funding types, including California State Preschool Programs, CDE-contracted Child Development Programs, Early Head Start, and Head Start Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C Programs, Programs receiving Child Care and Development Funds, and Programs funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Leveraging and Aligning with Other Efforts

One of the most exciting successes to date expressed by the Consortia is the unprecedented opportunity RTT-ELC provides to refocus existing public and private investments on evidence-based and promising practices. In essence, RTT-ELC created an umbrella for other quality improvement and funding efforts.

Prior to becoming Consortia members, several consortia noted their program quality efforts were well-established but functioning as separate projects. With the TQRIS Framework and the RTT-ELC goals and objectives, these independent projects have been aligned with the overarching program quality improvement system and are building upon each other. The key quality improvement tools, such as the ERS and the CLASS, are integral to the adopted Rating Matrix and serve as a common foundation to align the work of other existing quality improvement efforts. Consortia view the RTT-ELC as a pilot, which provides opportunities to develop innovative service delivery models and develop focused partnerships that can later be taken to scale. One consortium wrote, “We implemented a library partnership which built upon existing strong library-provider relationships resulting in successful engagement of 25 new Tiers 1 and 2 providers.”

Locally, the Consortia have begun to fully integrate multiple funding streams from the federal, state, and local level into a comprehensive local quality improvement system—their TQRIS. Most of the Consortia noted in their Annual Performance Reports that they are using the local TQRIS as a framework for all their other quality efforts and using the definition of quality developed for RTT-ELC implementation. Some consortia explicitly expressed that participation in RTT-ELC has become a catalyst in leveraging existing programs, such as the F5CA's Child

² Engaged sites represent a broader range of providers than those included in California's federal participation numbers.

Signature Program (CSP) and Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) Plus Program and grant funding. One consortium wrote, “We have made a conscious effort to fully integrate QRIS, accreditation, the CARES Plus Program, and First 5 tuition scholarships. We are conducting special meetings to focus on planning and tracking our progress with the end result being a seamless, one-stop shop for quality improvement support in our county and a framework in which to easily and quickly integrate new projects and funding.”

As a result of the implementation of RTT-ELC, existing additional quality enhancement projects are being updated so that their requirements align with the requirements of RTT-ELC to create consistency across local publicly funded projects. The Consortia have aligned these projects to ensure participants are prepared to be rated via the local TQRIS, support quality improvement in the participating early learning and development programs, and expand access to screenings and health care services.

Evaluation

In December 2013, the CDE entered into a contract with the American Institutes for Research to evaluate the implementation, effectiveness, and impact of California's QRIS. For the validation study, California is pursuing a rigorous study design and work plan to address the following:

1. Content validity—the extent to which the quality standards used for the QRIS ratings include the key domains of quality according to empirical research and expert opinion.
2. Concurrent validity—the association between the quality rating and independent measures of quality.
3. Reliability—the extent to which the ratings and rating components exhibit sound psychometric properties and differentiate programs as expected.
4. Sensitivity—the extent to which program ratings are affected by alternative rating calculation methods.

The evaluation will also include a child outcomes and effectiveness study, which includes the following:

1. Quality improvement—how quality improvement supports and incentives embedded in the QRIS affect the quality of early learning programs or child outcomes.
2. Child outcomes—the association of quality rating levels with children's early learning and development outcomes.

3. QRIS implementation—documentation of how QRISs function and issues that arise during implementation or expansion.

A half-term report of initial validation findings were reported in December 2014; the second phase of findings will be reported early 2016, along with recommendations and outcomes at both the local and statewide levels. These preliminary evaluation findings confirm that California's Rating Matrix covers a broad range of important domains of quality in early care and education settings and that the elements capture different aspects of program quality. Results of the QRIS validation study suggest that California may consider modifications to the rating matrix and pathways in several core categories. Study findings also suggest that alternative methods of presenting QRIS information to parents may enhance rating use and understanding.

RTT-ELC Reform Area III: Promoting Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

California addressed this reform area with the knowledge that prioritization of state resources to early learning and development programs committed to a continuous program improvement process will accelerate individual program advancement toward higher quality. This strategy will help move California further toward the goal of improved school readiness for children. Specifically, California chose to focus on two priorities: (1) development and use of statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards and (2) addressing children's health, behavioral, and developmental needs.

Early Learning and Developmental Standards

One of California's strengths is supporting early childhood teachers through CDE's California Early Learning and Development System, which provides an integrated set of resources based on state-of-the-art information for early learning and development and best practices in early education. Our state's research-based early learning and development standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, known as *Foundations*, aligns to the state's K–12 standards and their companion curriculum frameworks.

In August 2013, the California Early Childhood Online (CECO) Web site, <http://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org>, a RTT-ELC project, was launched with online overviews of *California's Infant/Toddler Early Learning and Development Foundations* and *Preschool Learning Foundations* (available in Spanish as well). There are four modules on the *Infant/Toddler Foundations and Framework* and nine on the *Preschool Foundations and Frameworks*, with a culminating/summary module. The modules provided on the CECO Web site enable early childhood practitioners to increase content knowledge and ability to provide developmentally appropriate experiences for children in their care. CECO provides access to comprehensive resources and courses in one centralized location to meet the ever-changing needs of the early childhood field. Training module hours vary; certificates indicate completion of a domain and the

amount of credit for training hours earned. In 2014, 1,030 early childhood educators completed the overview module, along with 757 infant/toddler modules and 2,166 preschool modules.

The Consortia reported utilizing the Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways document with the *California Early Learning Foundations and Frameworks* as key resources, available in both English and Spanish, used by coaches to inform site plans and professional development plans. Many also reported using the CDE Child Care and Development Fund quality improvement professional development providers: the PITC to provide training on the *Infant/Toddler Foundations and Framework* and the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) to provide training on the *Preschool Foundations and Frameworks*. PITC and CPIN trainers are active partners in many of the Consortia. Besides providing training on California's *Foundations*, PITC and CPIN also provide on-site TA or coaching to designated sites to support deeper understanding of the *Foundations*.

Merced County of Education stated that “the partnership with CPIN has been particularly instrumental in supporting efforts in a regional scale with mentee counties: Madera and Mariposa.” Likewise, Sacramento County Office of Education “partnered with PITC to provide direct training to [its] migrant site . . . receiving three full-day trainings and 32 hours of coaching all delivered in Spanish.” Both of these professional development systems, PITC and CPIN, have developed training partner certification processes that have allowed them to extend their reach and build capacity within many of the consortia, ensuring that more early learning providers fully understand the *Foundations and Frameworks* and use them to inform their practice.

Health Promotion

California supports health promotion practices in multiple ways including through the Early Learning and Development Standards (*Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations* and the *Preschool Learning Foundations*), CECO Web site, and CDE Nutrition Services Division’s Healthy and Active Preschoolers online modules.

Health, including screening, continued to be incorporated into the QRIS through both the Rating Matrix and the Pathways elements in the following ways:

Hybrid Rating Matrix:

- Community Care Licensing as Tier 1 (health, safety, and nutrition)
- ERS (health and safety)
- CLASS (social-emotional)
- Screening, both developmental (social-emotional) and health

- Child Observation (DRDP includes social-emotional and physical development and health)

Pathways:

- Social-Emotional Development (including California Collaborative on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning)
- Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity (including USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines)
- Early Learning Foundations and Frameworks (health-related areas are listed above)
- ERS (health and safety)
- CLASS (social-emotional)
- California's Early Childhood Educator Competencies (health, safety, and nutrition)

California's RTT-ELC also continued to leverage various screening efforts across the state in order to increase the number of children receiving developmental screenings and follow-up.

In 2014, Implementation Team members represented RTT-ELC at regular work group meetings of the State Interagency Team (SIT). The SIT work group was sponsored by the California Department of Public Health and focuses on the California Home Visiting Program (CHVP), which incorporated developmental screening into its program design.

California RTT-ELC funds provided training for Consortia members in all 16 counties to attend train-the-trainer sessions on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). ASQ-Social Emotional screening toolkits were also purchased. This training has assisted in increasing access to screening and also included a component on how to provide follow-up and appropriate referrals. In 2014, the CDE EESD extended this contract to provide continued support beyond the ASQ work initiated in 2013 to RTT-ELC mentee counties, serving an additional 14 counties led by: (1) Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County; (2) Early Childhood Council of Kern; (3) Imperial County Office of Education; (4) Kings County Office of Education; (5) Merced County Office of Education serving Madera and Mariposa counties; (6) Placer County Office of Education serving Placer, Nevada, and Sierra counties; (7) First 5 Riverside; (8) First 5 San Bernardino; (9) First 5 San Mateo County; (10) Stanislaus County Office of Education; and (11) Tulare County Office of Education.

The 2014 developmental screening work began with conducting consortium visits to create individualized county TA plans. Additional ASQ train-the-trainer sessions were conducted with TA on connecting screening results to making appropriate referrals. The

use of screening results to improve services and supports to staff and children served within the RTT-ELC participating sites is a focus of the contract, as is connecting to the work of the California Statewide Screening Collaborative (CSSC).

The CSSC brings together state, local, public, and private entities that focus on California's capacity to promote and deliver effective and well-coordinated health, developmental, and behavioral screenings for young children, birth to age 5. The Implementation Team members have represented RTT-ELC at its regular meetings. The CSSC goal is to enhance state capacity to promote and deliver effective and well-coordinated health, developmental, and behavioral screenings throughout California.

In 2014, the CSSC:

- Developed an Early Care and Education (ECE) Provider Screening Toolkit. Based on the work of the federal *Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!* screening initiative, the ECE Provider Screening Toolkit will be released for dissemination in January 2015. Technical assistance is being offered to interested RTT-ELC Consortia members to develop local screening pathways and referrals through use of the Toolkit.
- Launched a survey via the CSSC to learn about local screening services and related referral and data collection activities. These data will inform the characteristics of developmental and behavioral screening services throughout the state, particularly who is delivering screening and in what types of settings. A full report and data analysis was available at the January 2015 CSSC meeting.

In 2014, California screened 196,644 children with high needs, a 5.5 percent increase over 2013 but well below the target of 234,600 children. There was a drop in the number of these children referred for services who received follow-up or treatment; i.e., from 87,836 in 2013 to 88,713 in 2014, a modest increase.

California also successfully applied for an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant in 2013. The ECCS grant focuses on strengthening partnerships between California Home Visiting Program (CHVP), RTT-ELC, CDE, the California Head Start Association, F5CA, the First 5 Association, and the Office for Child Abuse and Prevention. Building on existing cross-agency systems change efforts lead by CHVP, the First 5 Association, California Project LAUNCH, Help Me Grow, and Strengthening Families, California will: (1) develop a mutually designed cross-agency agenda for change; (2) strengthen critical screening and referral mechanisms to ensure families are connected to services quickly; (3) promote development, implementation, and reimbursement of innovative, practical, preventative, and treatment interventions that mitigate adverse effects of toxic stress; and (4) provide mechanisms for California's early childhood workforce to better understand the importance of early brain development, reduction of toxic stress, and critical support of child and family resiliency. The ECCS Implementation Team will work in partnership with the RTT-ELC IAT to achieve its grant outcomes.

RTT-ELC Reform Area IV: Early Childhood Education Workforce

The federal application directed states to support early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities by providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities. This directive fits California's existing infrastructure of support to the early learning workforce. Current professional development opportunities are intensive, sustainable, and focus on educators' success with children in their programs. Building upon these efforts, California developed additional professional development elements, described below, to effectively serve the early learning workforce, increase quality in early learning settings, and in the end, support children's learning and development outcomes.

Workforce Competency Framework

An essential statewide element aimed at supporting a strong workforce is the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies, known as the *Competencies*, which is located on the CDE Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp>. California's robust *Competencies*, initiated in 2008 and completed in 2011, are aligned with the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* and the *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations* and guide professional development and related quality improvement activities. The *Competencies* serve four interrelated purposes: (1) provide structure for workforce development; (2) inform higher education course of study; (3) guide credentialing efforts; and (4) define educator skills, knowledge, and dispositions.

The following projects were developed based on the *Competencies* to address various workforce needs:

The *Competencies Integration Project (CIP)*, a SAC project, created a rubric for mapping the *Competencies* to course work and professional development (PD) training activities. Because of the breadth of these competencies, the CIP also created a Web-based Mapping Tool to assist faculty and PD providers in mapping their learning objectives to specific competencies. In 2013, the California Competencies Mapping Tool became operational. As of 2014, there has been an increase of 292 mapped courses, bringing the total number of mapped courses to 491. Likewise, from 2013–14, there has been an increase of 44 trainings that have been mapped with the Competencies via the web-based Mapping Tool, bringing the total number of mapped trainings to 63. The aforementioned data, as well as data gathered by the attendees of Webinars provided by child development higher education faculty from California community colleges and state universities and state-funded Professional Development Providers, demonstrates significant growth in the usage of the mapping tool.

Another SAC project, *Early Childhood Educator Competencies Self-Assessment Toolkit (ECE CompSAT)*, was developed as a professional development resource that

promotes self-reflection by the early childhood educators. The *ECE CompSAT* came online in February 2014 and will assist RTT-ELC site leaders and coaches with the development of professional growth plans by identifying the competencies needed for effective, high-quality early education practice.

Through the *Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP)*, the California Community College representatives, in collaboration with the EESD, developed the "Early Childhood/Child Development Lower Division 8" as a shared and essential portion of a lower division program of study. The RTT-ELC expansion of early learning core curricula at California community colleges has progressed. In October 2013, community college faculty expanded the initial *CAP* agreement to include a uniform set of common course outlines in the areas of Administration, Children with Special Needs, and Infant/Toddlers. A survey was conducted to further understand faculty interest and capture course uniformity in 103 colleges, offering the selected courses of study. Alignment will continue through 2016. Further information can be found at: http://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/services_cap.htm.

As part of the RTT-ELC grant application, California set targets for advancement of the ECE workforce in the attainment of state Child Development Permits. The only Child Development Permit category to see an increased number in 2014 was the Child Development Teacher Permit. The number of teachers with this level rose by 11 percent from 5,117 to 5,691.

Local Workforce Activities

The Consortia's RTT-ELC workforce support efforts are built upon their existing state structures (e.g., AB 212, CARES, CSP) and are seeking integration and sustainability. In addition, all are using existing local funding for workforce support of the TQRIS 2014 showed increased "integration" of coaching strategies to enhance site-based Quality Improvement Plans.

In addition to statewide resources, Consortia members implemented TA activities. All of the Consortia reported using coaching and site-level continuous quality improvement plans. All Consortia members continued to use coaching as a primary strategy. Most consortia combine coaching with advising (88 percent), mentoring (71 percent), and consultation strategies (82 percent). Over half of the Consortia reported using individual teacher professional growth plans (65 percent).

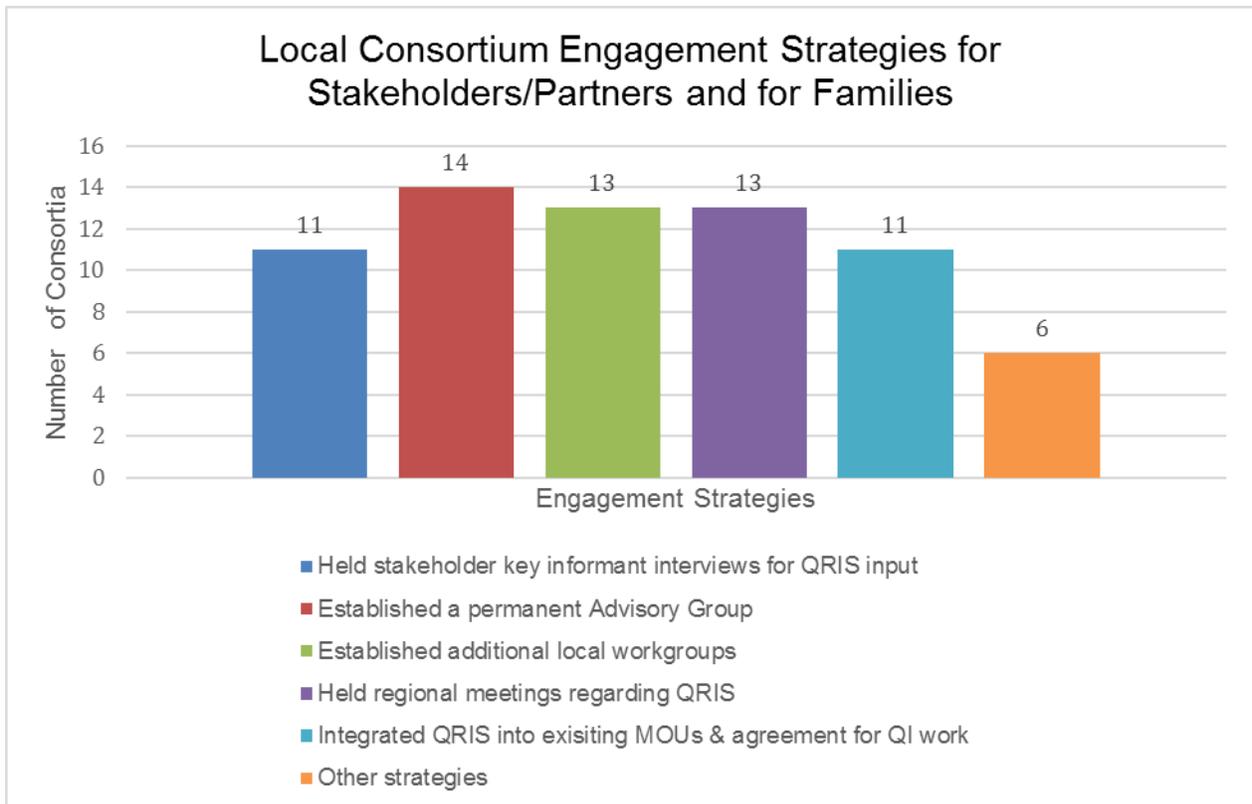
Partnerships

At the local level, the Consortia were also engaged in interacting with a variety of stakeholder and partner groups. Their groups generally involved parent groups, county or city officials, county offices of education and school districts, First 5 county commissions, child care resource and referral agencies, local child care planning

councils, tribal and migrant organizations, local early learning providers, and business representatives. When appropriate, members of these groups participated in local RTT-ELC advisory boards, workgroups, and general meetings.

The Consortia were surveyed on the strategies used in 2014 to involve local stakeholders and partners. The number of Consortia members utilizing various strategies are demonstrated in Chart 1.

CHART 1:



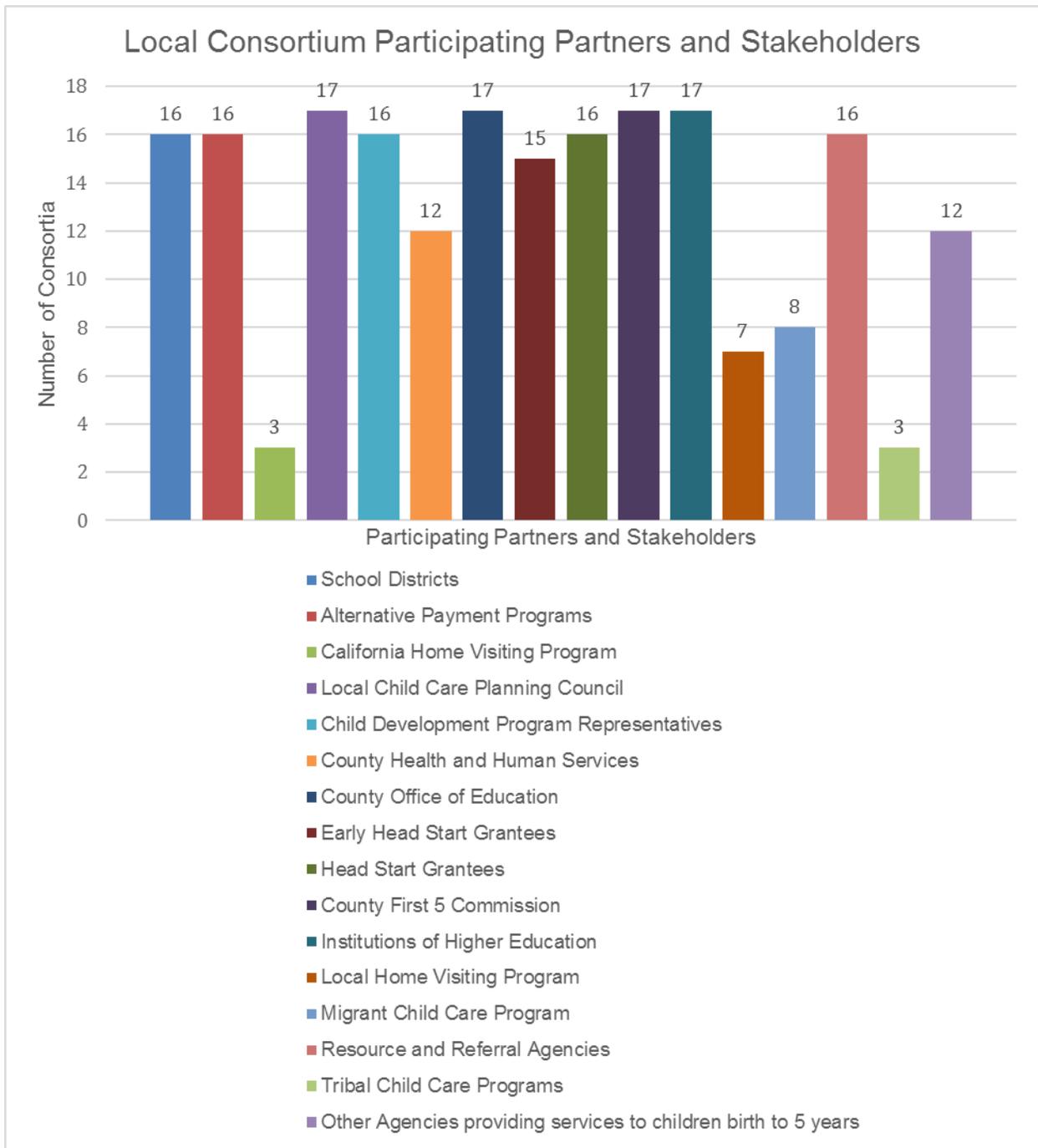
Other specific strategies that several Consortia employed were:

- Held regular meetings with school readiness coordinators (Sacramento).
- Supported and implemented the Roadmap to Kindergarten program that assists families during children's transition to kindergarten (Contra Costa).
- Interacted on a regular basis with local health care collaboratives (San Joaquin).
- Provided ongoing reports to Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development and the Child Care Planning Committee (Los Angeles County Office of Child Care).

- Implemented Engaging Families as Partners program with participating families (San Diego).

Consortia members were also surveyed to determine the types of participating partners and stakeholders they involved in their local consortium (see Chart 2).

CHART 2:



RTT-ELC Reform Area V: Measuring Outcomes and Progress

With the federal application's focus on understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry, California was able to capitalize on existing investments strengthening the alignment between preschool and kindergarten that included the use of the state's valid and reliable observational assessment of individual children's development in key domains of school readiness, namely the DRDP. This connected assessment information provides preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers, as well as their administrators, with a common platform to measure and plan for each child's development, school readiness, and ongoing instructional support.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The CDE has developed the Desired Results Developmental Profile—School Readiness (DRDP-SR) as a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The DRDP-SR currently includes the domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning (including self-regulation), social and emotional development, and English language development. Validity and reliability testing has been completed, and a calibration study of the DRDP-SR was completed in 2013.

The CDE and its assessment partners, WestEd and the U.C. Berkeley Evaluation, Assessment, and Research Center, have further developed the DRDP-SR in collaboration with the State of Illinois' RTT-ELC efforts. This includes the expansion of the instrument to include the domains of physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills), History-Social Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and Language and Literacy Development in Spanish. The instrument has also been expanded with later levels of development so the assessment is appropriate for use through the entire kindergarten year. To identify the expanded kindergarten entry assessment the instrument has been named the Desired Results Developmental Profile-Kindergarten (2015) (DRDP-K [2015]). The DRDP-K has been field tested and is being calibrated in the 2014–15 academic year. The DRDP-K (2015) with all domains will go into use in fall 2015.

Preliminary validity and reliability studies for DRDP-K took place in 2014, and final calibration activities commenced. Additionally, the CDE collaborated with its assessment partners (U.C. Berkeley and WestEd) on the design of additional validity and reliability research studies to begin in 2015. Studies for the DRDP-K that will commence in 2015 include rater certification, inter-rater reliability, criterion zone setting (cut score), and equating studies linking the current version of the DRDP-K assessment to DRDP assessments for preschool, thereby helping to build connections between early education and K–12 communities.

Each member of the Consortia is working with districts in their counties to support training and utilization of the DRDP-SR or DRDP-K within the first two months of starting Transitional Kindergarten or traditional kindergarten. In 2014, the DRDP-SR and the DRDP-K were used by 285 teachers, with 5,048 students in 41 local education agencies. Though still modest compared to California's kindergarten population, this represents almost a tripling of Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students assessed using these instruments.

RTT-ELC Expenditures for 2014

In 2014, a total of \$33,392,626.37 was expended for RTT-ELC grant activities, \$26,024,702.50 of which was disbursed to the Consortia.