

EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE FUND OVERVIEW

Administered as a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education and the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Purpose – States are challenged to develop new approaches to improve quality and would compete to establish model systems of early learning that:

Drive results-oriented standards reform across programs, setting a high standard of quality in order to better promote early learning, child development and school readiness.

Fund and implement pathways to improve existing early learning programs, with the goal of increasing participation of low-income children in high-quality settings.

Ensure that more children enter kindergarten ready for school, with the healthy cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and abilities necessary for success.

The System – The Early Learning Challenge Fund would support the following components of a model early learning system:

Aligned early learning and development standards that lead to school readiness and are integrated with program quality to guide curriculum and program development.

An evidenced-based quality rating system structured with progressive levels of quality-which may be used across all early learning settings and programs.

An effective system of program review, monitoring and improvement applied across all programs and settings.

An evidence-based system of professional development to prepare an effective and well-qualified workforce of early educators, including appropriate levels of training, education and credentials.

Strategies for families and parents to better assess program quality in their child's early learning program and to better support their child's learning

A coordinated 0-5 data infrastructure to collect essential information on where young children spend their time and the effectiveness of the programs that serve them

An age-and developmentally-appropriate curriculum and assessment system that is used to guide practice, improve programs, and inform kindergarten readiness

The Awards –The initiative incorporates two funding elements:

Quality Pathways Grants (5 year, renewable), are awards to high capacity states pursuing models of reform and excellence in early learning. Innovative plans would reflect significant progress toward establishing the elements needed to improve quality and learning outcomes for children, and a desire to take such improvements to scale.

Development Grants (3 year, non-renewable), are awards to states that demonstrate a commitment to strengthening and expanding their early learning system, but who need additional assistance to launch a standards-based, outcomes-driven system.

Application Requirements – In applying for a grant under this title, a State

- (1) **Shall designate a State-level entity** for administration of the project;
- (2) **Coordinate proposed activities with the State Advisory Council** on Early Childhood Education and Care and shall incorporate plans and recommendations from such Council in the application; and
- (3) **Submit the application** at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary of Education may reasonably require.