

B(1): Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)

B(1)(a). Statewide Tiered Program Standards

Michigan has developed and adopted a common, statewide, tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) in order to improve the quality of all early learning settings, for all children. The Michigan TQRIS – known as *Great Start to Quality* - is predominantly funded through the state’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality set-aside. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) is responsible for overseeing the implementation of *Great Start to Quality* via a contract with the Michigan Department of Education - Office of Great Start (MDE-OGS), which is the lead agency for CCDF in Michigan. ECIC works in close partnership with the CCDF and state pre-kindergarten programs at MDE-OGS, the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) – Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL), and the Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) to implement *Great Start to Quality*.

ECIC has a regionally-based, state-wide network of resource and referral centers – known as the Great Start Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) – that implement the local portion of *Great Start to Quality*, see Appendix XI, p. 390. RRCs provide information, resources and workforce development in service to program and provider quality improvement; coordinating with community partners, i.e., Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions, community colleges, school districts, United Way, and community foundations, to align and maximize the impact of public and private investments for quality improvement.

Great Start to Quality includes all licensed early learning and development programs and unlicensed, subsidized family, friend and neighbor providers (subsidized FFN providers). Michigan chose this unique approach to its tiered quality rating and improvement system due to a legacy of policy decisions that in 2009 resulted in nearly 70 percent of the state’s children who received child care subsidy being in subsidized FFN care. Launching *Great Start to Quality* without including subsidized FFN providers would have left a substantial portion of children with high needs in settings with no regulation or focus on quality.

Figure 1. Depiction of Great Start to Quality Continuum

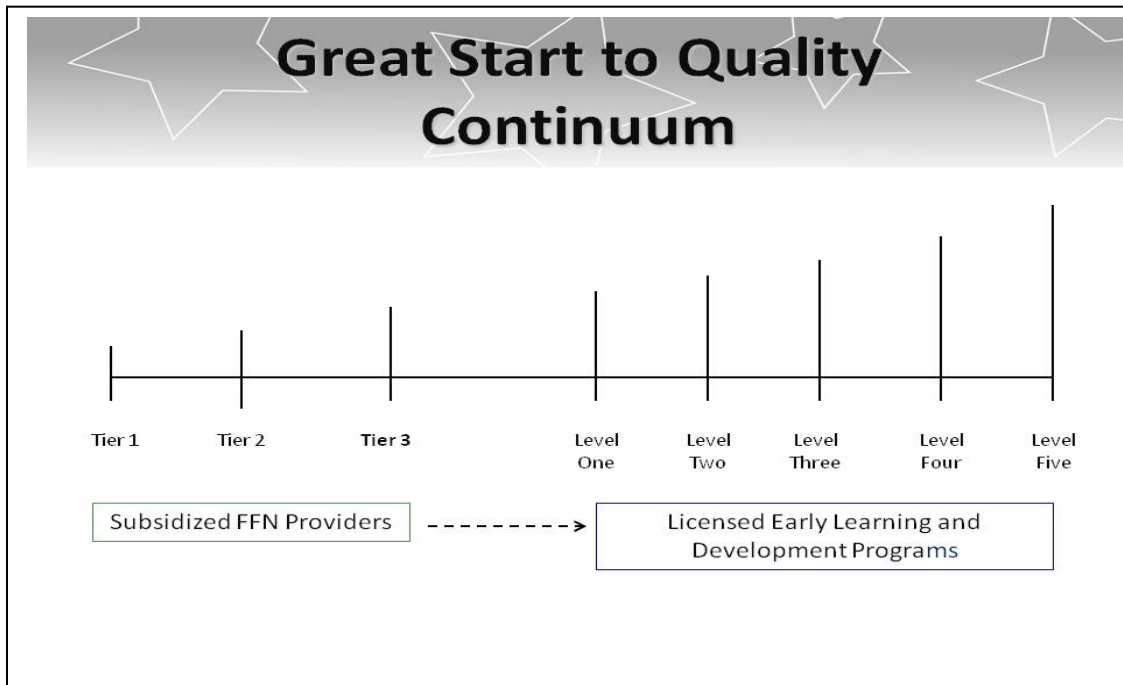


Figure 1, above, illustrates the *Great Start to Quality* continuum. There are three Tiers of quality improvement supports for subsidized FFN providers and five Levels of rated quality and quality improvement supports for licensed early learning and development programs. An unbroken line connects the state’s quality improvement efforts for subsidized FFN providers with the *Great Start to Quality*. This link is intentional and illustrates the “career” pathway Michigan has created to licensure for interested subsidized FFN providers.

Subsidized FFN providers enter *Great Start to Quality* at Tier 1 after their application to participate in the CCDF child care subsidy program is approved and they complete the required *Great Start to Quality* orientation training. Participation in Tier 1 is not voluntary. Subsidized FFN providers choosing to proceed to Tier 2 and 3, gain access to an increased rate from the CCDF child care subsidy at the completion of Tier 2, and access to quality improvement supports at both Tiers 2 and 3. Quality improvement specialists from the RRCs provide validation of quality improvement plans for Tier 3 through a home visit with the subsidized FFN provider.

All licensed early learning and development programs enter *Great Start to Quality* at Level One, after child care licensing confirms that the program is in compliance with licensing

regulations. Participation in Level One is not voluntary. Early learning and development programs may choose to move up the quality continuum. Licensed early learning and development programs in Michigan include:

- Head Start Centers
- Early Head Start Centers and licensed family programs
- Michigan's pre-kindergarten program – the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)
- Title I Program sites
- Child care centers and community based preschool programs
- Family homes – including homes licensed for up to 6 and up to 12 children

Great Start to Quality is based on a common, state-wide set of tiered program standards. The standards differentiate early learning and development programs by type and capacity, e.g. center-based, family home with assistant and family home without assistant. A copy of the *Great Start to Quality* standards is located in Appendix IX, p. 300.

The *Great Start to Quality* standards align with the state's early learning standards, the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Pre-Kindergarten* (ECSQ-PK) and the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs* (ECSQ-IT). Copies of both of these sets of standards may be found in the Appendix I, p. 3 & Appendix II, p. 112. Michigan's ECSQ-PK and ECSQ-IT are consistent with and meet thresholds of the National Research Council.

Early Learning and Development Standards: The *Great Start to Quality* standards include early learning and development standards and align with, and have been cross-walked to, the ECSQ-PK, ECSQ-IT and Head Start. Early learning and development is addressed in the *Curriculum and Instruction* standard. The *Curriculum and Instruction* standard has criteria for curriculum, screening and assessment, and consistency of care. Indicators include: a daily routine schedule, an approved program curriculum, a written plan for integrating and valuing children's culture and a consistent team of early childhood educators and peers.

Comprehensive Assessment System: *Great Start to Quality* recognizes the importance of a comprehensive assessment system that generates robust and coherent evidence of children's learning and development. The *Curriculum and Instruction* standard has criteria for screening

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and assessment. Indicators include: early childhood educator discussions regarding anecdotal notes/observations, completion of annual developmental screening, administering an approved child assessment tool at least twice annually, sharing child assessment results with parents twice annually and using assessment information to inform instruction and to make appropriate referrals where necessary especially for children with special needs as defined in this RTT-ELC application.

Early Childhood Educator Qualifications: The standard for *Early Childhood Educator Qualifications and Professional Development* addresses early childhood educator qualifications. Criteria for this standard includes: administrator qualifications, early childhood educator qualifications, and professional development requirements. Indicators address education levels related to position title (administrator, lead early childhood educators, and assistant early childhood educators) and include Graduate, Bachelor and Associate degrees, and Child Development Accreditation (CDA) credentials, as well as required annual clock hours of professional development. At least three annual clock hours of professional development must be focused on cultural competence and inclusive practices for children with special needs or disabilities, as well as engaging diverse children and their families.

Family Engagement Strategies: Family engagement strategies are included in the *Family and Community Partnership* standard. Criteria include: family partnerships, family strengthening and community partnerships. Indicators include: providing parenting education opportunities, formal and information communication with families delivered in ways that meet diverse needs, participation in program governance, opportunities to participate within the program, facilitation of transitions and participation in community associations. For children with disabilities there is an indicator for screenings, referrals, and follow-up to assure families are connected to appropriate comprehensive services.

Health Promotion Practices: Health promotion practices are directly addressed through criteria of the *Health Environment* standard; the physical environment is one criterion, with the indicator being a facility that is free of environmental risks, e.g., lead, mercury, asbestos and indoor air pollutants; another criteria is health promotion, indicators include: a nutritional plan approved by a dietician or nutritionist, dedicated time for daily physical activity, reviewing and

updating health records in accordance with the most recent Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Testing (EPSDT) findings, and a process for observing child's health and development and oral health care routines. Health promotion practices are also embedded in other standards and measured by indicators that include: health and safety requirements, developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up; and the promotion of physical activity, healthy eating habits, oral health, behavioral health and health literacy among parents.

Effective Data Practices: Effective data practices are contained within the *Curriculum and Instruction* standard. One criterion is curriculum, indicators include: a statement of educational and developmental priorities for the children, a written plan for integrating policies, procedures and practices that reflects a respect and valuing of children's culture and demonstrates cultural competence, a written plan for serving children with special needs; another criterion is screening and assessment, indicators include: uses child assessment results in parent-teacher conferences at least two times a year, uses assessment to inform individual, small group, and whole group instruction and interaction. This standard is supportive of reflective data practices related to individual children's development.

One element of the high-quality plan for this section is to align the *Great Start to Quality* standards with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria. NAEYC is the recognized authority on early childhood development and practice, and aligning the *Great Start to Quality* standards with the NAEYC program standards provides assurance that early learning and development program efforts to become accredited lead to *Great Start to Quality* ratings at a Level Four or Level Five.

Another element of the high-quality plan for this section is to refine the *Great Start to Quality* standards to ensure they have a strong enough focus on the developmental needs of children with special needs and infants and toddlers. The first three years are a critical period for child development and it is essential infants and toddlers are in high-quality early learning and development programs. Early learning and development programs at the highest quality levels have the greatest potential to support infant and toddler development. This is achieved by incorporating elements specific to infants and toddlers in the *Great Start to Quality* standards.

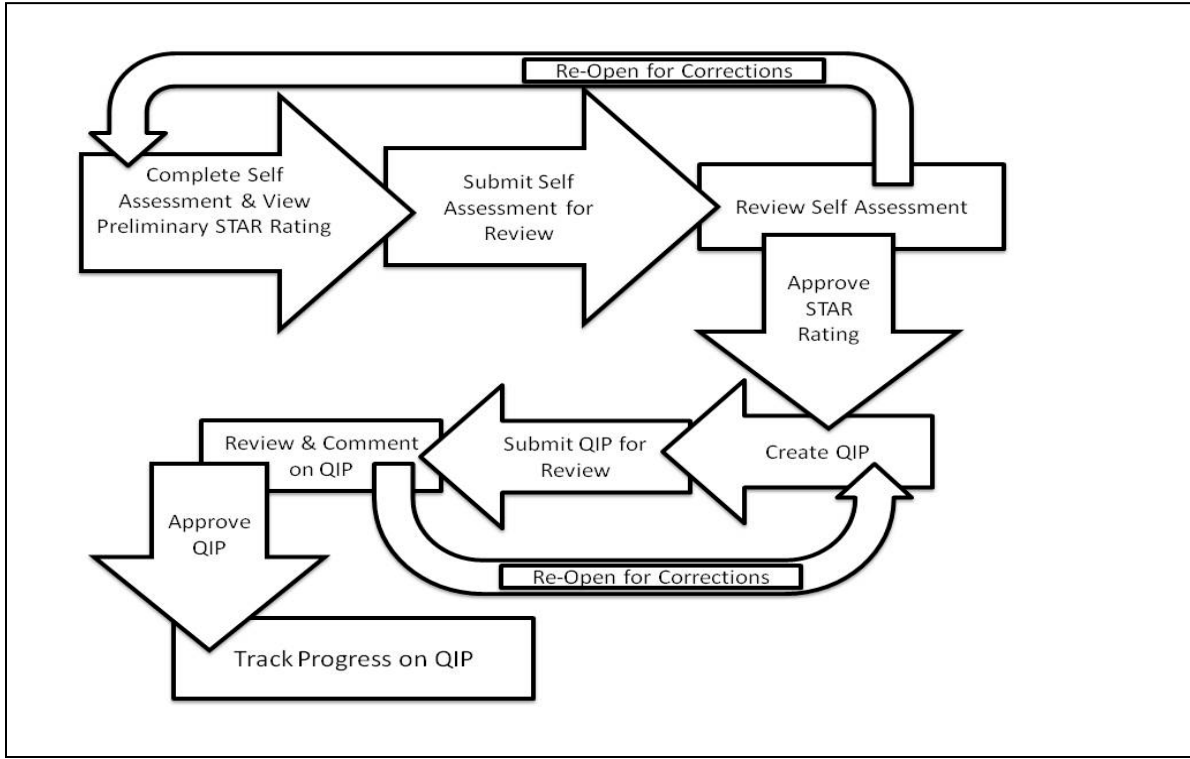
B(1)(b). Clear, measurable, standards that differentiate program quality

Great Start to Quality has five differentiated levels of quality for licensed early learning and development programs, with the foundational level (or Level One) being child care licensing. *Great Start to Quality* uses stars as the symbol of quality, with Level One being one star and Level Five being five stars. Participation in Level One of *Great Start to Quality* is not voluntary. Taking steps to progress to Level Two and beyond is the choice of each early learning and development program.

Programs choosing to progress from a Level One to Level Two or Three, complete a self-assessment, supported on-line by the *Great Start to Quality* data platform. A representative sample of self-assessments is verified by quality improvement specialists, annually.

A *Great Start to Quality* rating is determined and unique quality improvement plan (QIP) is generated through the on-line system, based on evidence provided. Early learning and development programs can update their self-assessment responses, to impact their rating, every 90 days and must update annually. Figure 2, below, illustrates the process and steps an early learning and development program would complete to receive a Level Two or Three rating.

Figure 2. Great Start to Quality: On-Line Assessment Process for Levels One Through Three



Upon achieving Level Three, an early learning and development program can request a validation visit through their RRC. An independent, impartial, trained rater will assess the program using the appropriate version of the Program Quality Assessment® (PQA) developed by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. There are Infant/Toddler, Preschool, and Family Child Care versions of the PQA®. The PQA® is evidence-based and has undergone extensive research and testing to demonstrate reliability and validity, (Smith, C., Jurkiewicz, T., & Xiang, Z.P. 2002; Schweinhart, L., Epstein, A., Okoloko, V., & Oden, S., 1998). The PQA® assesses 63 dimensions of program quality in seven domains, which include: learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interactions, curriculum planning and assessment, parent involvement and family services, staff qualifications and development, and program management, see Appendix XII for PQA® summary score sheets.

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The total points available through *Great Start to Quality* are 50. A minimum number of points must be accumulated in each category of the standards, as well as at each level within the standard. The minimum for Level Two is 16; Level Three is 26; Level Four is 38; and Level Five is 42. Figure 3 below illustrates the summary of the *Great Start to Quality* point structure.

Figure 3. *Great Start to Quality* Point Structure

Standards Category	Total Possible Points	Minimum Point Distribution			
		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
I. Early Childhood Educator & Professional Development	16	3	6	8	8
a) Administrator Qualifications	4				
b) Early Childhood Educator Qualifications	7				
c) Professional Development	5				
II. Family & Community Partnerships	8	4	4	6	6
a) Family Partnerships	4				
b) Community Partnerships	4				
III. Administration & Management	6	2	4	4	4
a) Administration and Management	6				
IV. Environment	8	2	4	6	6
a) Physical Environment	2				
b) Ratios	2				
c) Health Environment	4				
V. Curriculum & Instruction	12	4	6	8	8
a) Curriculum - programs/homes	4/6				
b) Screening and Assessment	6				
c) Consistency of Care – programs only	2				
Additional Points in Any Category		1	2	6	10
Minimum Requirement for Star Rating	50	16	26	38	42

Michigan sought evidence of the measurability of the *Great Start to Quality* standards prior to the implementation. ECIC worked with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation to conduct a beta test of the standards with ten early learning and development programs (five child care centers, one family child care home with an assistant, and four family child care homes without an assistant). Programs in the beta test were accredited by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Association of

Family Child Care (NAFCC); the hypotheses was that these programs would be rated at Level Three – Five.

The findings from the beta test affirmed that many of the indicators for the *Great Start to Quality* Standards could be measured but that improvements were still needed to assure measurability. A second beta test with a larger sample size is included in the high-quality plan for this section. This additional beta test will also examine inter-rater reliability. An item analysis will be conducted to test each standard. The beta test will help to reassure participating programs that *Great Start to Quality* is committed to transparency, accuracy and accountability.

B(1)(c). Linked to State licensing system

Great Start to Quality is in its first year of operation for all licensed early learning and development programs. Tier 1 and Tier 2 have been operational for subsidized FFN providers for two years. Based on the experiences of other states, *Great Start to Quality* will not make program ratings public on Great Start CONNECT until the fall of 2012. Great Start CONNECT is Michigan's web-based, searchable resource and referral source for licensed early learning and development programs. Great Start CONNECT also houses the professional development registry for early childhood educators. Every licensed early learning and development program has a profile on Great Start CONNECT. The basic Great Start CONNECT profile can be enhanced by the early learning and development program with information about unique program attributes and/or photos. The rating the program receives in the *Great Start to Quality* will be posted to their profile to assist families in accessing high-quality early learning programs for their children.

There is a daily data share between Great Start CONNECT, child care licensing, and the DHS. This data share assures information that is available to the public on Great Start CONNECT is accurate and up to date. Programs with serious licensing violations do not remain searchable on Great Start CONNECT. Great Start CONNECT holds other data that will be put into use over time, as *Great Start to Quality* evolves, including program participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and early childhood educator credentials.

One element of the high-quality plan for this section is to expand access to Great CONNECT by the DHS Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL). Expanding access to Great Start CONNECT for licensing consultants will allow access to quality level rating information and quality improvement plans, and thus the ability to target specific supports to early learning and development programs during licensing site visits. State-level early childhood system building decisions need to be based on accurate data and expanding access by BCAL to *Great Start to Quality* reports ensures decisions are informed by real-time, exact data.

B(1) High-Quality Plan

B (1) - KEY GOALS:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the <i>Great Start to Quality</i> data platform to better track licensing compliance and standards information. • To improve <i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards to support the development of high-quality programs that effectively serves children with special needs as defined by this grant application and infants and toddlers. • To better align <i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards with the NAEYC and NAFCC accreditation standards, with a specific focus on early childhood educator qualifications and family engagement strategies. 				

Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Process is determined to include access by licensing consultants to rating levels and quality improvement plans.	A process is essential to determine access levels to the data.	Completed by August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) • Michigan Department of Education- Office of Great Start (MDE-OGS) • Department of Human Services- Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (DHS-BCAL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Data share is expanded to include quality rating levels with licensing (BCAL).	Licensing consultants can support early learning and development programs with specific consultation on licensing site visits to improve quality.	Completed by January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS-BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor
Data share is expanded to include quality improvement plans with licensing (BCAL).	Licensing consultants can support early learning and development programs with specific consultation on licensing site visits to improve quality.	Completed by July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS-BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor
Process is determined to expand access to reports for BCAL.	A process is essential to determine reporting needs.	Completed by January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS-BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor
Data share is expanded to include reports about implementation status.	State level decisions about quality improvement are informed by data.	Completed by July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor
Review and revise <i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards to address focus on infants and toddlers and children with special needs.	Ensure standards adequately address infants and toddlers, and children with special needs.	Review and revision completed by December 2012	ECIC MDE-OGS	State level partners serving children with high needs
Consultation with NAEYC to review and align the <i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards.	Providing assurance that the efforts to become accredited lead to <i>Great Start to Quality</i> ratings within a level 4 or 5.	Completed by July 2012	ECIC MDE-OGS	State affiliates
Cross-walk of NAEYC accreditation standards and <i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards.	Providing assurance that the efforts to become accredited lead to <i>Great Start to Quality</i> ratings within a level 4 or 5.	Completed by December 2012	ECIC MDE-OGS	State affiliates
Conduct a second beta	To ensure measurability	Completed by	ECIC	Beta test

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
test with a larger sample.	of the standards.	December 2012		contractor
Appropriate Financial Resources:			\$1,532,600 from this grant \$500,000 from other sources	
How Needs of Different Early Learning and Development Programs will be Addressed:			Referenced in the narrative	
How Michigan will Meet Needs of Children with High Needs, as well as Unique Needs of Special Populations:			Referenced in the narrative	

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards	Program Standards Elements¹ <i>If the Program Standards address the element, place an "X" in that box</i>						
	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engagement	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other
Great Start to Quality All licensed early learning and development programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	Cultural Competence
MI Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten MDE-OGS early learning and development programs Head Start	X	X	X	X	X	X	Program structure; Community Collaboration and Financial Support; and Environment of Care and Learning

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Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	Program Standards Elements¹ <i>If the Program Standards address the element, place an "X" in that box</i>						
	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engagement	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards							
Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers All licensed early learning and development programs	X	X Screening Measures	X	X	X	<i>Great Start to Quality</i> is linked back to licensing	
Licensing Rules for Family and Group Child Care Homes Licensed Family Homes (licensed for up to 6 and up to 12 children)	X	X Screening Measures	X	X	X	<i>Great Start to Quality</i> is linked back to licensing	
<i>Great Start to Quality</i> standards are used by early learning and development programs that want to achieve a higher level of quality rating. Programs begin at Level One in <i>Great Start to Quality</i> , which meets licensing requirements. Currently 100 percent of licensed early learning and development programs are in <i>Great Start to Quality</i> .							

B(2): Promoting Participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

B(2)(a). Effective policies and practices to include all early learning and development programs

Since 2009, Michigan has focused its Child Care and Development Fund(CCDF) quality set-aside investments on improving the quality of early learning and development programs, i.e., licensed child care centers and family homes, and subsidized FFN providers, to improve the school readiness of children with high needs. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) has worked with the regionally-based, state-wide network of resource and referral centers, the Great Start Regional Resource Centers (RRCs), to implement these reforms.

In 2009, the Michigan legislature required subsidized FFN providers to participate in six hours of First Aid and CPR Certification and health and safety training prior to either become or maintain their eligibility for subsidy payment. The CCDF program and ECIC capitalized on this opportunity to begin the implementation of *Great Start to Quality* for subsidized FFN providers. In 2010, over a period of eight months, the RRCs trained 18,000 subsidized FFN providers. This unprecedented effort assured that all children receiving the benefit of the child care subsidy were in the care of an individual who could skillfully intervene in the case of an injury or emergency.

In 2010-2011, using CCDF American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, ECIC began to put into place quality improvement and rating resources to enable the implementation of the full continuum of *Great Start to Quality* in 2011. A cadre of highly trained quality improvement specialists has been developed and in 2010, these specialists provided 1,794 quality improvement consultations to early learning and development programs and early childhood educators. From these consultations, 1,298 quality improvement plans were developed. A program quality assessment was completed by 935 early learning and development programs.

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The design of *Great Start to Quality*, including the requirement that all subsidized FFN providers and all licensed early learning and development programs must participate, demonstrates Michigan's commitment to all children, especially those with high needs, benefitting from an accountable, high-quality early learning and development program.

The goal of *Great Start to Quality* is for all publicly funded early learning and development programs to participate. Current participation of early learning and development programs is as follows:

- **State-funded preschool programs:** GSRP programs are licensed, whether provided in a school building or child care center, and participate in *Great Start to Quality*.
- **Early Head Start and Head Start Programs:** are licensed center-based programs and participate in *Great Start to Quality*.
- **Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and part C of IDEA:** Programs funded by IDEA that serve children with disabilities prior to kindergarten are not currently licensed. A goal of the high-quality plan for this section is to implement rules to integrate these programs into the licensing system.
- **Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** are center-based, licensed and participate in *Great Start to Quality*.
- **Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program:** are all required to participate in *Great Start to Quality*.

As was noted above, programs funded by IDEA for children prior to kindergarten are on track to becoming regulated during the period of this grant. Two other purveyors of early learning and development programs, that Michigan is interested in bringing into *Great Start to Quality*, are early learning and development programs delivered by federal-land tribes, and military child care programs.

In order to make progression into the highest level of quality attractive to all early learning and development programs will have access to free quality improvement supports, Teacher Education and Compensation Helps Early Childhood® MICHIGAN (T.E.A.C.H.) bonuses, and eventually, a higher reimbursement level for subsidies, progression to Level Three and higher in *Great Start to Quality* will be required.

B(2)(b). Effective policies and practices to help more families afford high-quality

Michigan has existing policies and practices designed to help families of children with high needs afford high-quality early learning and development programs. Children with high needs who are eligible for GSRP, Early Head Start and Head Start attend these programs at no charge to their families. Eligibility for child care subsidy is at approximately 130 percent of the federal-poverty level and families can choose from a variety of settings, including licensed early learning and development programs and family homes, subsidized FFN providers, license-exempt providers on federal land and license-exempt providers in facilities with all parents on-site and available.

The programs and subsidized FFN providers receive reimbursement based on hourly rates. Licensed rates are determined by the age of the child. Subsidized FFN provider rates are determined by the *Great Start to Quality* Tier. Family co-payments are based on the household income and can be waived for all categorically eligible families (families receiving cash assistance or Social Security Income (SSI), foster children, or children with an active protective services case). Programs and subsidized FFN providers bill bi-weekly and can be reimbursed for up to 80 hours in a two-week period, a rule established by the Michigan Legislature in 2010.

The policies and practices detailed above were established for the CCDF program when the Lead Agency for the program was the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS). Now that the Lead Agency for the CCDF program is Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the program is a part of the Office of Great Start within MDE, the goal is to transform this program to include more effective policies and practices for supporting working families to afford high-quality early learning and development programs and increase the school readiness of children with high needs.

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Detailed below is Michigan's high-quality plan to pilot test and prototype the modification of the state's CCDF payment structure and increase access by working families to high-quality early learning and development programs through the innovative use of CCDF subsidy funds. The pilot will focus in geographic areas with high concentrations of children with high needs and will prioritize infants and toddlers. Infant and toddler care is costly, and with the loss of strategic state programs to serve infants and toddlers with high needs, the opportunity to receive child care in the highest quality program is incredibly important for these most vulnerable children.

In the pilot, CCDF subsidy dollars will be used to purchase slots in Level Three-Five rated programs to ensure that children with high need have access to the highest quality full-year, full-day programs. Consideration will also be given to geographically rural areas that may not have an early learning and development program rated at a Level Three or above. Scholarship slots will receive higher reimbursement rates than the current CCDF rate structure and will allow for greater continuity of care by moving away from hourly rates that are largely inconsistent with a program's typical business practice and sustainability plan. Other policy changes that will be carefully explored through this pilot include: allowing subsidies to follow eligible children until kindergarten entry for continuing services if family situations change (e.g., parent loses job); structuring co-payments to increase access to licensed and registered early learning and development programs.; and increasing income thresholds for families prior to their exiting the scholarship assistance. Information gained from the pilot will inform the restructuring of the subsidy program throughout the period of this grant.

Michigan's targets for the numbers and percentages of early learning and development programs that will participate in *Great Start to Quality* are in table B-2 (c) below. As has been noted previously, Michigan already has 100 percent of currently licensed programs participating.

B(2) High-Quality Plan

B (2) - KEY GOALS:

- All children with high needs and children with special needs who are enrolled in publicly funded early learning and development programs are served by programs participating in Great Start to Quality.
- Policies and practices will be examined and revised to help working families afford high-quality child care and to maintain the supply of care in areas with high concentrations of children with high needs.

Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Convene state level partners to determine process for licensing rule change to include early childhood special education.	A process will outline responsibilities and timelines.	Completed by December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE-OGS • ECIC • DHS-BCAL 	
Early childhood special education programs are licensed and enter <i>Great Start to Quality</i> at Level One.	All licensed early learning and development programs enter <i>Great Start to Quality</i> at Level One.	Completed by December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE-OGS • ECIC • DHS-BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement specialists • PQA raters
Provide intensive supports to achieve high-quality levels.	For consistency early childhood special education program ratings will not be public for one year to allow programs to achieve higher levels of quality.	Completed by December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE-OGS • ECIC • DHS-BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement specialists • PQA raters
Convene state level partners to examine current subsidy structure and identify potential changes to support working families.	Current policies need to be reviewed in order to determine flexibility.	Completed by April 2012	MDE-OGS	ECIC
Determine process for changing subsidy structure for pilot test: Define parameters, identify steps, and prepare for implementation.	A process will outline responsibilities and timelines.	Completed by June 2012	MDE-OGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • DHS

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Pilot is implemented.	To assure that children have access to full-day, full-year high-quality settings until Kindergarten entry without a disruption in early learning.	January 2013	MDE-OGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • DHS
Appropriate Financial Resources:			\$ 15,023,900 from this grant	
			\$20,090,540 from other sources	
How Needs of Different Early Learning and Development Programs will be Addressed:			Referenced in the narrative	
How Michigan will Meet Needs of Children with High Needs, as well as Unique Needs of Special Populations:			Referenced in the narrative	

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: Great Start Readiness Program</i>	538	538 ¹	100%	538	100%	538	100%	538	100%	538	100%
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹	600 ²	600 ¹	100%	600	100%	600	100%	600	100%	600	100%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	57	<i>Great Start to Quality</i> Participation upon licensure will be at 100%									
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	58	<i>Great Start to Quality</i> Participation upon licensure will be at 100%									
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	630 ⁵	Aggregated data not yet available for 2011 - 2012									

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Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Section 31a of State School Aid Act: At Risk – Early Childhood Instructional Services Source: State 31a Report as submitted in Michigan Electronic Grants System	119 ⁶	This data will not be represented in subsequent B tables									
Programs receiving from CCDF funds Subsidized FFN Providers ⁴	13209 ³	13209 ¹	100%	13209	100%	13209	100%	13209	100%	13209	100%
Other <i>Describe: CCDF Licensed Early Learning and Development Programs</i>	4131 ³	4131 ¹	100%	4131	100%	4131	100%	4131	100%	4131	100%
All Licensed Programs Combined Total	11861 ³	11861	100%	11861	100%	11861	100%	11861	100%	11861	100%
¹ 100% of programs participate in <i>Great Start to Quality</i> at entry and on-going. The actual number of programs will fluctuate annually based on the number of grants awarded. Individual program numbers by type are not unduplicated, however, the early learning data system referenced in E(2) will track and aggregate program data. ² Number of Early Head Start and Head Start programs is based on estimate from 2010-2011 fiscal year; number of programs is not yet available for 2011-2012. ³ Both unlicensed and licensed providers are included in <i>Great Start to Quality</i> . Continued subsidy payment is contingent upon <i>Great Start to Quality</i> participation at Tier 1 for subsidized FFN. ⁴ Subsidized FFN providers are Michigan’s unlicensed, subsidized providers. ⁵ Title I numbers are estimated based on 2010 data of the number of children in an average class-size of 18. Actual data not yet aggregated. ⁶ 31a numbers are estimated based on 2011 data of number of children in an average class-size of 18. Data will not											

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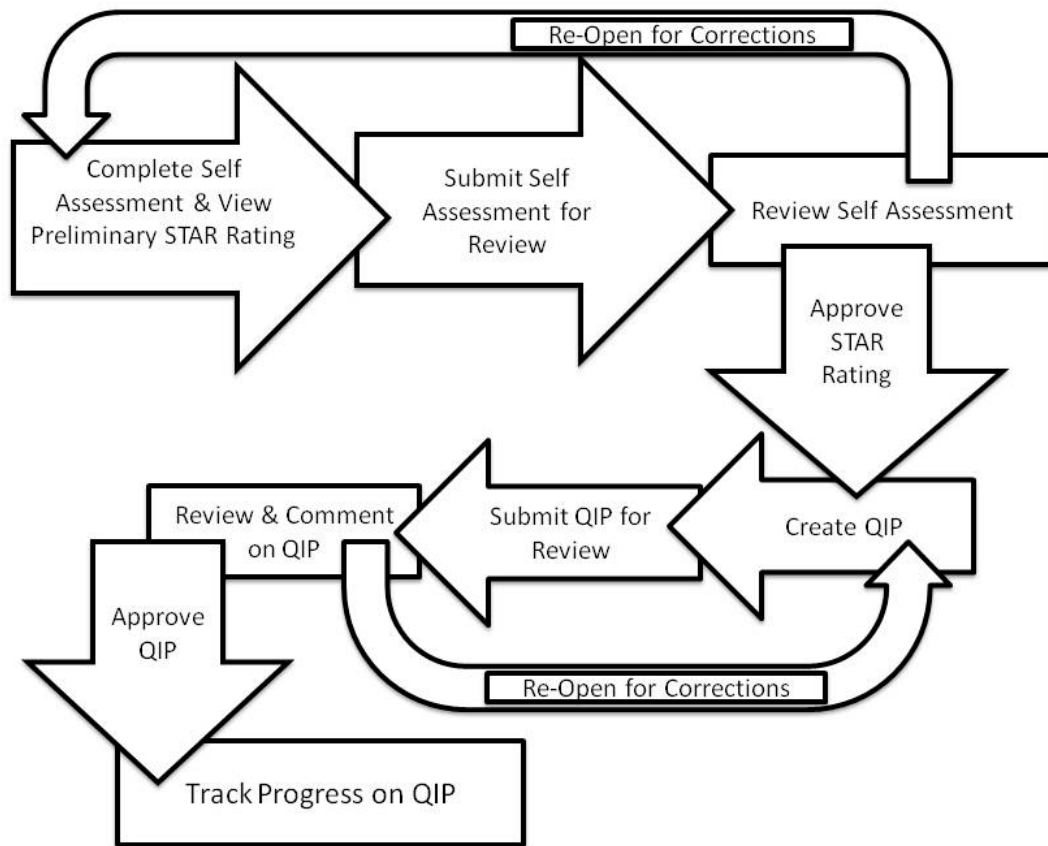
Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<p>be viewed in subsequent tables however, they are licensed and participating in <i>Great Start to Quality</i>, so it was important to list it here.</p> <p>Note: The Great Start Readiness Program, section 619, part B and part C of IDEA numbers include grantees amounts and not their respective site numbers.</p>											

B(3): Rating and monitoring early learning and development programs

B(3)(a). Valid and reliable tool for monitoring

Great Start to Quality monitors all licensed early learning and development programs through the on-line self-assessment process. Rating occurs only for programs moving from Level Three to Levels Four and Five. The Level Two and Three on-line self-assessment generates a *Great Start to Quality* score, and rating, based on program responses to the survey; a customized quality improvement plan (QIP) is generated as well. Early learning and development programs can update their rating every 90 days, and must update annually. Figure 4 shows a flowchart of how the *Great Start to Quality* data platform supports this process.

Figure 4. *Great Start to Quality: On-Line Assessment Process for Levels One Through Three*



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The Program Quality Assessment® (PQA) is the rating tool employed by *Great Start to Quality* for programs moving from Level Three to Level Four and Five. The PQA® is designed for use in all settings, not just those using the HighScope® educational approach. The PQA® design reflects a growing consensus that assessment of program quality requires a multidimensional approach. (Fiene & Melnick, 1991) To be considered multidimensional, a measure of program quality must include both the structural information used to determine compliance with licensing regulations, for example, as well as dynamic information that captures children's experiences in the physical and inter-personal learning environment. By employing a combination of observational and interview techniques, the PQA® encompasses both of these dimensions.

The PQA®'s psychometric properties were tested in a series of studies in which 800 program settings were observed. The internal consistency, calculated with Cronbach's alpha, averaged .89, .94, and .95 in three study samples. In a confirmatory factor analysis, five factors corresponding to sections one through five accounted for 58 percent of the variance. The PQA® has been significantly correlated with other measures of program quality, teacher beliefs, and child outcomes with the magnitude of these correlations ranging from .25 to .86. *Great Start to Quality* program quality raters who utilize the PQA® are expected to achieve and maintain inter-rater reliability above 80 percent. A contractor will be sought with high expertise in the administration and reporting of the PQA® to assure that raters assessing program quality in the *Great Start to Quality* continue to meet this level of inter-rater reliability.

There are many rating, monitoring and performance systems for early learning and development programs, e.g., Head Start performance reviews and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation validation visits. With those realities in mind, *Great Start to Quality* will work with the publicly funded early learning and development programs in the state to analyze performance, monitoring and rating data currently collected, to explore the possibility of assigning quality levels based on reciprocal information.

B(3)(b). Providing quality rating and licensing information to families

Licensing compliance history, including health and safety violations for early learning and development programs, is available to parents on-line through the child care licensing data base. This same data is shared with Great Start CONNECT where it is combined with other pertinent program data and displayed in an on-line profile; every licensed early learning and development program has a profile in Great Start CONNECT. Great Start CONNECT provides links to community programs, services and resources, including information on high-quality early learning and development in Spanish and Arabic.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, Great Start CONNECT will begin to display the quality ratings, Level One through Level Five, for all licensed programs. A detailed certificate that shows the program's star level will be provided for public display. An example of this certificate is in Figure 5 below.

Web-site banners for program web-sites, web-based parent guides highlighting "star" programs, and priority placement in Great Start CONNECT's search engine will also be provided to facilitate parents becoming knowledgeable about quality, what it looks like and why it matters, and also to reward programs.

Figure 5. Great Start to Quality Program Certificate



B(3) High-Quality Plan

B (3) - KEY GOALS:

- Improve internal policies and procedures for *Great Start to Quality* rating and monitoring.
- Great Start Collaboratives and Regional Resource Centers have access to local and regional data related to program capacity and quality levels.
- Parents have access to early learning and development program quality level information in formats that are easy to understand and use when making decisions.

Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Identify data needs related to capacity and quality levels of early learning and development programs for local and regional Great Start networks.	Determine the data necessary for the regional and local networks to inform local and regional decision making and inform the public about early learning and development program quality levels.	Completed by December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Identify needs related communicating quality levels to families served by the local and regional Great Start networks.	Determine the data necessary for the regional and local networks to inform families about early learning and development program quality levels.	Completed by December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor
Determine process necessary to incorporate quality levels on Great Start CONENCT.	To inform families about early learning and development program quality levels.	Completed by August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor
Incorporate <i>Great Start to Quality</i> Levels into the public profile on Great Start CONNECT.	To inform families about early learning and development program quality levels.	December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor
Incorporate quality levels as a search criterion on Great Start CONNECT.	To inform families about early learning and development program quality levels.	Completed by August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor
Incorporate <i>Great Start to Quality</i> Levels into the search criteria on Great Start CONNECT.	To inform families about early learning and development program quality levels.	December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS • DHS - BCAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Start to Quality</i> platform contractor • Great Start CONNECT contractor • Communications Contractor
Annual Report is developed for <i>Great Start to Quality</i> .	To inform the public about <i>Great Start to Quality</i> .	Completed December 2014		
Training outside, objective observers in the PQA assessment as raters.	To ensure that inter-rater reliability is rigorous among trained observers using the PQA.	Completed by December 2012	ECIC	PQA Raters
Appropriate Financial Resources:		\$ 3,150,000 from this grant		

Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
How Needs of Different Early Learning and Development Programs will be Addressed:		Referenced in the narrative		
How Michigan will Meet Needs of Children with High Needs, as well as Unique Needs of Special Populations:		Referenced in the narrative		

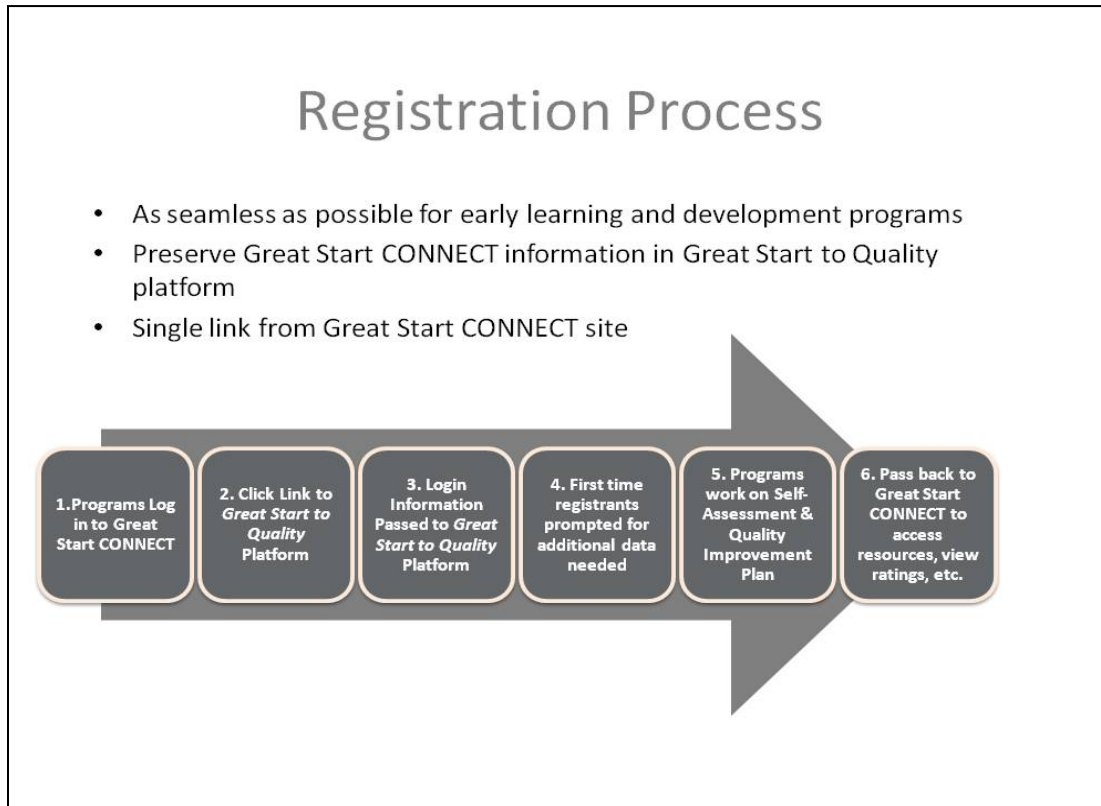
B(4): Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

B(4)(a). Policies and practices that provide support and incentives

Great Start to Quality is designed to enhance and more effectively target incentives and supports for the continuous quality improvement of early learning and development programs. The Great Start Regional Resource Centers (RCCs) serve as the regional-to-local hub for the delivery of coordinated incentives and supports. The RCCs provide expertise, assessments, ratings, resources, specific guidance and instructions to inform and support the development of and the achievement of quality improvement plans. RCCs provide assistance to subsidized FFN providers in Tier 3, and early learning and development programs in Levels Two and Three, in the completion of self-assessments. Hands-on, personal consultation is available if dictated by programmatic or personal circumstance. To ensure access to the internet is not a barrier, RCCs have internet portals to help early learning and development programs complete the self-assessment, developing a quality improvement plan, or requesting a rating. RCCs coordinate with existing community partners to deliver consultation, intensive supports and services to early learning and development programs participating in *Great Start to Quality*.

Great Start CONNECT functions as the on-line portal for *Great Start to Quality* where early learning and development programs have access to the self-assessment, on-line quality improvement plans, and rating. Great Start CONNECT is the on-line professional development registry for early childhood educators. Programs can search for, register for and track workforce development opportunities, in service to their *Great Start to Quality* improvement plans. Figure 6 below illustrates the portal.

Figure 6: Great Start CONNECT: the Gateway to Great Start to Quality



Innovations to Support Continuous Quality Improvement:

Great Start to Quality will pilot test and prototype the innovations detailed below as a key element of Michigan’s high-quality plan to support continuous quality improvement.

Program Quality Assessment® (PQA) Training Grants: Available exclusively to early learning and development programs rated at a Level Three and serving children with high needs. Programs will have opportunity to participate in peer learning to analyze the results of their self-assessment and prepare to progress to Level Four and Five. Programs may apply for funding for improvements in the learning environment, professional resources, facility improvement and parent resources.

Business Development Support: Access to the *Growth Fund*, a grant program offered through *First Children's Finance* focused on improving quality with business practices, would be available to early learning and development programs rated at a Level Three or higher and serving children with high needs. The *Growth Fund* offers business development grants to develop a business plan and provide on-site technical support for infrastructure changes, continued planning, and support. Eligible programs and providers must also have completed a quality improvement plan. This pilot effort is sponsored by *First Children's Finance* and will align the grant program and provider support with *Great Start to Quality*. *First Children's Finance* will also work with the RRCs to offer eight workshops per year on business development, for programs at Level Three or above, serving children with high needs. Specific workshop topics and opportunities will be based on self-assessment and quality improvement plan data.

T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarship Bonuses: This funding will be available to early learning and development programs that participate in T.E.A.C.H.®, and serve children with high needs. Awards will be available to programs at each *Great Start to Quality* level increment as an incentive for early learning and development programs serving children with high needs, to higher educational attainment and career development.

Quality Improvement Funds: RRCs will have quality improvement funds to offer incentives to early learning and development programs serving children with high needs. Incentives will be directly linked to quality improvement plans.

Private Sector Scholarships for Children with High Needs: Priority access to private sector funded scholarships will be offered to early learning and development programs rated at a Level Three or higher. Michigan's Women's Caring Program, a non-profit agency that raises private funds that support scholarships for families to access early learning and development programs, has agreed to work with ECIC to use the *Great Start to Quality* program rating as a criteria for scholarship provision.

B(4)(b). Supports to help working families access high-quality

Michigan's plan, as detailed in B2, includes supports to help working families who have children with high needs access high-quality early learning and development programs. The proposed changes to the subsidy reimbursement system will impact families eligible for subsidy and allow those families to have greater access to high-quality early learning and development programs, and provide for continuity of high-quality early learning and development experiences for the children.

Additionally, Great Start Readiness Programs (GSRP) currently have various program options, such as all-day/alternate-day, part-day, school-day, GSRP/Head Start blend; as well as guidance to provide other types of supports to working families, including providing wrap-around early learning experiences, transportation, and meals for children during program hours.

The Michigan School Aid Act for the 2011-2012 school year includes intent language regarding the establishment of an early childhood block grant. The block grant would allocate funds to intermediate school districts, rather than local school districts, for GSRP and other early childhood programs funded from this source. The MDE-OGS will use this opportunity to rethink how funding will be targeted to areas with high concentrations of need for to increase access for children with the highest needs.

The GSRP and Head Start programs currently have various options, such as all-day/alternate-day, part-day, school-day, GSRP/Head Start blend; as well as guidance to provide other types of supports to working families, including providing wrap-around early learning experiences, transportation, and meals for children during program hours.

B(4)(c). Setting ambitious yet achievable targets

Chart (B)(4)(c)(1) below contains Michigan’s ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of *Great Start to Quality* and the number and percentage of children in those programs. The goal at the end of this grant is to have 50 percent of early learning and development programs serving children with high needs at the highest Levels, Level Four and Five. The targets were determined based on the following criteria:

- Participation in Great Start to Quality, beyond Level One, is voluntary
- Current number of children enrolled in programs with high needs
- Current number of participating programs in *Great Start to Quality* (100%)
- Capacity of intensive supports available through the RRCs
- Capacity of cadre of raters available
- Capacity of quality improvement specialists available
- Programs will continue to increase quality levels and progress upward on the *Great Start to Quality* continuum, decreasing the number of programs at lesser quality levels
- Supports for working families to access high-quality early learning and development programs.

Also considered was the focus on supporting early learning and development programs serving children with highest needs to achieve and maintain the highest quality levels. During the initial years of *Great Start to Quality* implementation, Great Start Regional Resource Centers will intensively outreach, engage, and provide specific supports to programs for completing self-assessments, preparing for PQA® assessments, developing quality improvement plans, and incorporating changes in practice to improve quality levels.

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Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.					
	Baseline (Today)	Target- end of calendar year 2012	Target- end of calendar year 2013	Target- end of calendar year 2014	Target- end of calendar year 2015
Total number of programs covered by the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	11861	11861 ¹	11861	11861	11861
Number of programs in Level 1	11861	5931 (50%)	4744 (40%)	3558 (30%)	2965 (25%)
Number of programs in Level 2	0	2372 (20%)	2372 (20%)	1779 (15%)	1186 (10%)
Number of Programs in Level 3	0	2372 (20%)	2372 (20%)	1779 (15%)	1779 (15%)
Number of Programs in Level 4	0	1186 (10%)	1779 (15%)	2965 (25%)	2965 (25%)
Number of Programs in Level 5 (Highest Level of Great Start to Quality)	0	0	593 (5%)	1779 (15%)	2965 (25%)
<p>Baseline data is 100 percent of programs at entry level. Subsequent year growth reflects aggressive and targeted support to encourage rapid movement of those programs serving High Need Children i.e. Head Start, GSRP and Accredited programs. Variation by year and between levels reflects an on-going lateral shift as movement occurs toward 2015 goal of 50 percent of High Need Children in High Tiered (Levels Four and Five) programs.</p> <p>¹ Actual number of programs in subsequent years will vary based on retention rate of existing programs and those newly added to the system.</p>					

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Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target-end of calendar year 2012		Target - end of calendar year 2013		Target-end of calendar year 2014		Target-end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: Great Start Readiness Programs</i>	28904	0	0	1156	4%	2890	10%	6359	22%	8671	30%
Early Head Start and Head Start	38417	0	0	384	2%	1537	4%	3073	8%	3842	10%
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	Programs serving these children are not yet licensed. As these programs become licensed it may impact <i>Great Start to Quality</i> participation rates across programs.										
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	Programs serving these children are not yet licensed. As these programs become licensed it may impact <i>Great Start to Quality</i> participation rates across programs.										
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	11332	0	0	227	2%	227	2%	453	4%	453	4%
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program	27964	0	0	280	2%	1119	4%	1677	6%	1677	6%
Other <i>Describe:</i>											
<i>Baseline data is actual data with no programs currently at Levels Four or Five. Levels Four and Five are the highest Levels of quality in Great Start to Quality. The numbers of children represented in this table are not unduplicated as some children participate in more than one program. The early learning database will allow for the opportunity to track data by individual child and provide unduplicated counts in the future.</i>											

B(4) High-Quality Plan

<p>B (4) - KEY GOALS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide enhanced and targeted supports, including incentives, to early learning and development programs to continuously improve by achieving and maintaining higher quality levels. • Provide supports for working families to access high-quality early learning and development programs. • Provide intensive and accelerated quality improvement supports for early learning and development programs serving children with the high needs, and programs in high concentration areas of children with high needs.
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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Determine process for pilot incentive implementation.	A process will outline responsibilities and timelines assuring accountability.	Completed by July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement specialists • First Children’s Finance • T.E.A.C.H.
Determine areas for pilot incentive implementation.	Focus pilot incentives in areas with high concentrations of children with high need.	Completed by July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement specialists • First Children’s Finance • T.E.A.C.H.
Pilot incentives for high-quality early learning and development programs serving children with high needs.	Programs serving children with the highest need should be at the highest quality levels to have the greatest impact on child outcomes.	January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIC • MDE-OGS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement specialists • First Children’s Finance • T.E.A.C.H.
Convene state level partners to review and analyze current GSRP funding.	Need to determine potential opportunities the block grant affords for supporting working families.	Completed by December 2012	MDE-OGS	ECIC
Establish a revised funding formula, application process,	Process and procedures are essential to implementation of the block grant.	Completed by December 2012	MDE-OGS	ECIC

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
program criteria, and data reporting requirements.				
Block grant is implemented.	Working families are supported to access high-quality early learning and development.	January 2013	MDE-OGS	ECIC
Increase number of quality improvement specialists.	Additional quality improvement specialists are essential to supporting programs areas where there are high concentrations of children with high needs.	Completed by August 2012	ECIC	RRCs
Appropriate Financial Resources:			\$10,428,000 from this grant \$1,500,000 from other sources	
How Needs of Different Early Learning and Development Programs will be Addressed:			Referenced in the narrative	
How Michigan will Meet Needs of Children with High Needs, as well as Unique Needs of Special Populations:			Referenced in the narrative	

B(5). Validating the effectiveness of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)

B(5)(a). Validating, using research-based measures

An evaluation approach that employs multi-method, qualitative and quantitative, and multidimensional examination of data from the program, community, regional and state levels, will be utilized to examine the validity and the effective implementation of *Great Start to Quality*. The proposed evaluation design is intended to provide formative and summative feedback regarding two key evaluation questions:

1. How well do the *Great Start to Quality* standards differentiate levels of program quality?; and,

2. How are quality ratings and changes in quality ratings related to children's development, learning, and school readiness?

The initial question involves testing the validity of the *Great Start to Quality* standards in relation to program standards, well established in the literature, which address program staffing, administration, family and community partnerships, classroom environment, and curriculum and instruction.

The second question addresses the relationship between program quality and children's development, focusing on how initial program quality, as well as subsequent changes in quality, is most related to children's observed outcomes and progress during preschool and at kindergarten entry. A specific focus will be placed on identifying the level(s) of program quality that are related to development and school readiness for children with high needs and children with special needs, as defined in this application, and who may benefit the most from high-quality programs.

In addition, a third evaluation question, pertinent to understanding the contexts associated with effective *Great Start to Quality* implementation and improvements in *Great Start to Quality* ratings across the state will be examined:

3. What are specific local, regional and state conditions that promote the effective implementation of *Great Start to Quality* and the growth of higher quality early childhood programs throughout the state?

The evaluation design includes secondary and primary data collection involving both the population of programs targeted by *Great Start to Quality* and a stratified sample, targeting early learning and development family based and center based programs, including Head Start, GSRP, IDEA and Title 1 serving children in targeted communities. The targeted communities will be those identified as the highest need communities in the state during the state's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitation grant application. See Appendix XIII, p. 396 for a list of these communities. All types of programs included in *Great Start to Quality* will be reflected in the sampling design.

B(5)(b). Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress

Use of primary data to validate *Great Start to Quality*.

To address the extent to which *Great Start to Quality* differentiates levels of program quality, a validation process will be undertaken that involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. To quantitatively validate *Great Start to Quality*, several approaches will be used. First, as noted in section B1, the state will work with a highly qualified national vendor to develop a crosswalk using the *Great Start to Quality* standards and NAEYC accreditation criteria. This process will provide information relative to the construct validity of the standards. Second, two existing measures of program quality, the Preschool Quality Assessment® (PQA, HighScope, 1998) and the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008) will be scored for a subsample of 120 programs, reflective of communities across the state. Scored criteria from the PQA®, the CLASS, and *Great Start to Quality* will be compared statistically to assess construct validity. Third, as a confirmation of the self-assessment and rating processes, trained raters from the evaluation team will examine and rate each sampled program relative to the five *Great Start to Quality* standards; evaluator ratings will be compared, via calculation of kappa coefficients, with either self-report (for Level One to Three) or rater scores (for Level Four and higher). In addition, family questionnaire data from sampled sites will provide another source of data for validating the Parent Engagement component of *Great Start to Quality*.

To qualitatively address issues of validation, program directors will be interviewed and focus groups will be held with directors and early childhood educators with regard to the “face validity” of *Great Start to Quality*. Director and early childhood educator perceptions about the standards and criteria will be audiotaped and transcribed. Responses are expected to provide insights regarding what early childhood educators see as program strengths that are not represented in the criteria and/or criteria they feel are not thoroughly clear in the standards, thus making it difficult for programs to address the criteria. Early childhood educators will also be invited to reflect on the ways in which they believe the implementation of *Great Start to Quality* may or has influenced their classroom practices. Content analysis methods, guided by a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), will be employed in analyzing qualitative data. With this inductive approach, emerging themes across transcripts will be identified, reflecting how *Great Start to Quality* is experienced by the directors and early childhood

educators using it. Results will inform the implementation, including types of support that may promote effective implementation and use of *Great Start to Quality*. Interviews and focus groups will be administered early in the evaluation process so that information gleaned from the interviews and focus group may be utilized by RRCs to improve their practices with early learning and development programs.

Use of primary data to examine relations between program quality and children's development and learning.

After establishing the validity of *Great Start to Quality*, addressed in Question 1, the next step of the evaluation will be to examine the links between program quality and children's outcomes. This multistep process includes testing the effects of quality ratings on children's outcomes concurrently, over time (reflecting the relations between growth in program quality ratings and growth in children's development and learning), and at entrance into kindergarten (assessed as status at kindergarten entry). As one approach to examining the relationship between program quality and children's development and learning, a representative subsample of early learning and development programs will be followed over a two year period to more thoroughly understand how program, local, regional, and state conditions influence program quality improvement and the extent to which quality affects child outcomes. A stratified cohort sampling approach will be employed, specifically stratifying based on five important characteristics: community setting (urban/rural), program type (family based programs as well as center based programs including Head Start, GSRP, Title 1 and IDEA funded programs, and for profit programs), initial program quality, program size, and percent of children with high needs, at or below 200% of poverty, in the program. Well-staffed data collection teams, with backgrounds in early childhood education or child development, strategically based in geographic areas and trained and supervised by the evaluation team, will observe 60 representative programs each year for two years (120 programs in total). Within each of these targeted programs a sample of ten, three-year-old children (N = 600 children per year, totaling 1200) will be followed over a two year period (4 total assessments per child via direct assessment in the classroom, teacher ratings and family questionnaire data collection, fall and

spring each of the two years prior to the kindergarten assessment at age 5 years) until their entry into kindergarten.

This approach will provide the data needed to assess the impact of program quality and changes in program quality on child development, learning, and school readiness. Commonly used measures of social-emotional (e.g. SCBE, delay of gratification tasks), cognitive (e.g. Leiter-R; Child Math Assessment) and language/literacy (e.g. Oral and Written Language Scales, name writing task, Test of Preschool Early Literacy) development and learning will be used throughout this assessment. Where possible, measures will align with those already in use by early learning and development programs. This design will also allow for the collection of family questionnaire data relative to parenting and the home environment (e.g. Protective Factors Survey; Beck Depression Inventory) which will allow for statistical handling of family level characteristics when examining the effects of childcare quality on children's development.

Overall, this evaluation design will allow for a comparison of outcomes relative to children's enrollments in programs with lower (Level One or Level Two quality) versus higher quality ratings (Level Three or higher) and, an assessment of the incremental value added with each interval increase in quality rating. For example, this design will allow the state to examine the quality level rating that is needed to see sufficient gains in development and learning (e.g., is a Level Four or Five rating needed or can a Level Three rating also promote the targeted child outcomes). Particularly for children at highest risk for poor outcomes, testing for protective effects of participation in high-quality early learning and development programs (and at what level of quality) is critical.

The evaluation team will include a statistician with expertise in longitudinal modeling of nested data (such as children within programs housed within communities) and a methodologist with expertise in complex sampling designs who will validate the sampling design for the proposed evaluation. Likewise, the final sample size for the subsample of programs and children will be verified via power analysis for longitudinal latent growth curve models to ensure adequate statistical power to detect effects. Proposed analyses include latent growth curve modeling to test growth in program quality and children's development over time, including developmental and learning status at kindergarten entry in the subsample of children, and

multivariate analyses to test relations between program quality and children's status at kindergarten entry statewide.

Uses of secondary data to examine relations between program quality and children's school readiness.

Once it becomes available in 2014, statewide kindergarten entry assessment data will be utilized to examine the relationships between program quality and development and learning status at kindergarten entry. The implementation of the universal identifier code (UIC) through the state's early learning data system (ELS) will allow the linking of early learning and development program attendance data, to elementary school assessments, and quality ratings.

Uses of primary data to identify characteristics associated with effective implementation and growth in program quality.

The proposed design will also allow an investigation of the specific local, regional and state conditions that promote the effective implementation of *Great Start to Quality* and the growth of higher quality early childhood programs throughout the state. Specifically, this component of the evaluation targets readiness to utilize *Great Start to Quality* relative to its effective implementation and to improvements in quality ratings. First, questionnaire data on program/organizational readiness to change (e.g. to utilize *Great Start to Quality*) will be collected from the subsample of programs, described above, that will be followed over three years. Data pertaining to the readiness of the RRCs to support programs' use of *Great Start to Quality* (e.g. timeliness of responsiveness to programs, type and amount of support provided to programs, program satisfaction with regional center support) will be collected as well. The readiness information from programs and RRCs will allow for an understanding of the extent to which the climate for effective implementation (at the regional and program level) is related to the degree of change in quality in programs and to the rate of change (how quickly early childhood programs moved to new quality rating levels).

Second, interviews with program directors will be administered annually to better understand directors' perceptions regarding the value of utilizing *Great Start to Quality*, the need

for it, and program capacity to utilize it. A grounded theory approach, particularly appropriate for studying how experiences are interpreted, will be utilized. Results will complement quantitative approaches in considering how readiness is linked with effective implementation and growth in quality ratings.

Uses of secondary data to examine improvements in *Great Start to Quality* ratings.

Secondary data collected by the state regarding rating score of programs and basic program demographics, over time, will be used to assess the growth of program quality across the state and to assess differences in improvement rates across the specific *Great Start to Quality* standards. Two methods are useful in examining change in program quality ratings over time. First, survival analysis will be used to understand the length of time to change in quality ratings and how program (e.g. readiness to utilize *Great Start to Quality*) and community (e.g. community demographic risk indicators) characteristics are related to improvements. Examining these contextual characteristics is important because they may influence the rate and degree to which local programs change in quality (time to change in quality ratings). Second, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping is a technique that allows for visually graphing the intersections of demographic characteristics relative to improvements in ratings. GIS mapping will be used to illustrate program quality and quality improvement across the state and its interaction with community demographics (e.g. poverty rates, unemployment rates, race) and the regional centers through which *Great Start to Quality* is implemented. It will allow the state to better understand the extent to which the most vulnerable of children have access to high-quality early learning and development programs and which communities (and demographic profiles) are benefiting from improvements in program quality.

Unique Features of Evaluation Design

The unique features of the evaluation design include: a) assessment of early childhood educator and director/program readiness to participate in *Great Start to Quality* and readiness of the state and its RRCs to implement it; b) longitudinal assessment of child development, learning and school readiness relative to program quality; c) the use of GIS mapping to better understand the intersection of geographic location, demographics (diversity characteristics,

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poverty rates, etc) and access to resources as they relate both to successful *Great Start to Quality* implementation and to quality as it relates to children’s outcomes, and, d) an examination of program, local, and regional characteristics that are associated with effective *Great Start to Quality* implementation and growth in program quality across the state. This examination will also involve an assessment of state policies and procedures associated with effective implementation across the RRCs.

B(5) High-Quality Plan

B (5) - KEY GOALS:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To validate the extent to which the tiers in <i>Great Start to Quality</i> accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. • To assess the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to children’s development, learning, and school readiness. • To identify program, community, and RRC characteristics related to the effective implementation of <i>Great Start to Quality</i> and to improvements in quality ratings. 				

Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
Select and finalize measures.	Measures appropriate for the scope of the program and that align, as possible, with other state initiatives will contribute to a thorough evaluation and will data systems capacity in the state.	Finalize measures by February 2012.	Evaluation team collaborates with the state	
Hire and train data collection staff.	Qualified and trained data collection staff is essential to a valid evaluation.	Hire by end of February 2012; train by July 1, 2012	Evaluation Team	
Attain human subjects approval for research/ including human subjects training for data collection staff	Approval is required for data collection by an evaluation team/ renewal each year.	Complete by March 2012. Renewal each year	Evaluation Team	
Initiate and complete sampling process for subsample of programs and children.	Appropriate sampling design is critical for a valid evaluation.	Complete by August 2012	Evaluation Team, including statistician with expertise in sampling designs	MDE-OGS ECIC RRCs
Begin qualitative	Understanding how program	Begin June 2012;	Evaluation team	Receive

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
interviews with program directors and staff in subsample. Complete additional interviews annually.	directors, program staff and RRCs perceive <i>Great Start to Quality</i> and its components is important to evaluating effective implementation of <i>Great Start to Quality</i> .	interviews to be conducted annually through 2014		contact information through RRCs ECIC
Data collection-readiness questionnaires for subsample.	Assessing readiness to utilize <i>Great Start to Quality</i> in a subsample of programs will contribute to a better understanding of characteristics associated with effective implementation of <i>Great Start to Quality</i> and growth in program quality.	Begin June 2012; Complete by November 2012	Evaluation team	
Conduct validation process for subsample of programs.	Validation of the system is necessary in accurately assessing program quality.	Begin July 2012 with subsample of programs; Complete by December 2012	Evaluation Team	RRCs ECIC
Conduct data collection for subsample of children and programs to completed fall and spring each year.	The more comprehensive data collection associated with this approach will allow for a more thorough understanding of relationships between growth in program quality and children's development over time.	Begin September 2012 and complete by May 2015.	Evaluation Team	
Conduct GIS mapping.	GIS provides another perspective on program quality by allowing for an examination of the intersections of program quality, community and region characteristics.	Begin to build the GIS model in Year 1 and completion of model analyses in Year 3, 2014.	Evaluation Team	
Conduct data analyses.	The multi-analytic approach proposed provides a comprehensive analysis of data relative to the validity of <i>Great Start to Quality</i> in differentiating program quality and to the relations between program quality and children's development, learning and school readiness.	Complete qualitative content analyses for first round of interviews by March 2013; analyses continue each year with subsequent interviews.	Evaluation Team	
Prepare semi-annual and annual evaluation reports.	Frequent progress updates regarding the evaluation will allow for open communication	Ongoing beginning with the first semi-annual	Evaluation Team	Presentations to and consultations

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Key Activities	Rationale	Timeline and/or Key Milestones	Party(ies) Responsible	Other Key Personnel
	and shared investment in the evaluation.	report in June 2012		with the MDE-OGS
Prepare final evaluation report	Dissemination of results and identification and dissemination of implications for <i>Great Start to Quality</i> is critical to its effective use	September-November 2015	Evaluation Team	Presentations to and consultations with the MDE-OGS
Dissemination of findings.	Dissemination of findings relative to the effective implementation and validation of <i>Great Start to Quality</i> and its relationship to children's development and school readiness will provide useful information for other states wishing to implement systems.	Final dissemination efforts begin November 2015. Dissemination, as appropriate of evaluation components will occur earlier in the evaluation.	Evaluation Team; Office of Great Start	MDE-OGS, stakeholders
Appropriate Financial Resources:			\$3,875,000 from this grant	
How Needs of Different Early Learning and Development Programs will be Addressed:			Not applicable for this item.	
How Michigan will Meet Needs of Children with High Needs, as well as Unique Needs of Special Populations:			Not applicable for this item.	