

# Race to the Top— Early Learning Challenge Grant

## An Overview

North Carolina Institute of Medicine  
Task Force on Early Childhood  
Obesity Prevention  
January 20, 2012



# NC Wins Early Learning Challenge

- Dec. 16, 2011—NC notified of selection
- \$70 million award
- One of nine states selected



# Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Grant Program

- Significant and far-reaching new federal initiative
- Joint program
  - US Dept. of Health and Human Services
  - US Dept. of Education
- 4-year grants—Jan. 1, 2012–Dec. 31, 2015
- Precise and prescriptive guidelines and scoring rubric



# ELC Purpose

Challenges states to “build a coordinated system of early learning and development that ensures that many more children from low income families and disadvantaged children, from birth to age five, have access to dramatically improved early learning and development programs and are able to start kindergarten with a strong foundation for future learning.”



# ELC Focus

- Bold action to improve early learning and development
- Supports states that demonstrate “commitment and capacity to build a statewide system that raises the quality of early learning and development programs so that all children receive the support they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.”



# North Carolina's Response

- Extraordinary opportunity to build upon history of pioneering and model work in the field
- Potential to create a transformative system of services to help assure that **every** child has the chance to come to school ready to succeed
- Plan centers on strategies, projects, and activities that were
  - most responsive to scoring rubric
  - most likely to yield dramatically improved results
- Focuses on
  - long-term capacity building
  - one-time investments for ongoing benefit



# NC's Reform Agenda: Ready to Succeed

- Build on achievements
- Overarching goal:  
Each and every child ready for success in school and life
- Focus on
  - outcomes
  - shared accountability
- Supported by integrated data system with information that is
  - timely
  - useful for planning



# NC's Reform Agenda: Ready to Succeed (cont.)

- Grounded in research-based knowledge
  - child development
  - effective implementation practices
- Comprehensive system of services
  - early learning and development
  - health care and social-emotional development
  - family strengthening
- Begin at the beginning, assuring infants and toddlers have best possible start
- Provide access to a continuum of appropriate and high-quality services through early years
- Coordinated by the Early Childhood Advisory Council



# NC's Plan: Four Areas of Focus

- Strengthen the state's early childhood system and build its capacity to foster positive outcomes for young children
- Enhance the quality of programs to serve young children and their families and improve access to high-quality programs
- Strengthen the early childhood workforce to increase staff and system effectiveness and sustain change
- Target high-intensity supports and community infrastructure-building efforts to turn around poor outcomes for young children in the state's highest-need counties



# NC's Plan: Transformation Zone Strategy

- Focus intensive effort in selected high-need counties in northeastern North Carolina
- Provide comprehensive set of services and supports offered when and where needed
- Help achieve dramatically improved outcomes for all young children
- Lessons learned through concentrated approach used to
  - hone early childhood strategies
  - improve outcomes for young children across the state



# NC's Plan: Major Projects

- Strengthening the system and building capacity to foster positive child outcomes
  - Early Learning and Development (ELD) Standards
  - Integrated data system
  - K-3 assessment
  - Local leadership collaborative
- Enhancing the quality of programs and promoting access to high-quality programs
  - QRIS revision
  - Supports for new QRIS participants
  - Supports for attaining a higher rated license
  - Child care health consultant supports
  - Family engagement
  - Expansion of developmental screening and referral



# NC's Plan: Major Projects (cont.)

- Strengthening the early childhood workforce
  - Multiple strategies for education
    - Community College Innovation Fund
    - Online master's degree for leadership and management
    - T.E.A.C.H. for previously unserved staff (i.e., home visitors)
  - Ongoing professional development
    - Trainers' guide
    - Training sessions on standards and assessment
    - Regional support for coaches, mentors, and technical assistance providers
    - Director Leadership Institute



# NC's Plan: Major Projects (cont.)

- Targeting high-intensity supports and community infrastructure in high-need counties
  - Screening and referral services
  - Family strengthening programs
  - High-quality ELD programs for infants and toddlers
  - Specialized support for ELD programs for children's health, challenging behaviors, and infant-toddler care and education



# NC's Implementation Plan

- Lead Agency: Early Childhood Advisory Council
- Participating State Agencies with responsibility for various projects:
  - Division of Child Development and Early Education
  - Division of Public Health
  - Department of Public Instruction, Office of Early Learning
- Contracts and MOUs with other state and local agencies and organizations



# NC's Goal

Dramatically improved  
outcomes for North Carolina's  
young children

A stronger and more  
competitive economy for  
North Carolina

