

Executive Summary

For the reporting year, please provide a summary of your State's (1) accomplishments, (2) lessons learned, (3) challenges, and (4) strategies you will implement to address those challenges.

During the second year of the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) in Wisconsin, there have been significant accomplishments in all areas of the grant, some challenges from year one have been overcome, and new strategies have been developed.

In 2014, RTT-ELC helped improve the quality of early care and education provided to children in Wisconsin by enhancing the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), helping more children gain access to high-quality care, and helping child care providers improve the quality of their care.

YoungStar, Wisconsin's QRIS, was enhanced in a number of ways. The reliability, validity, and speed of the current ratings were improved through a contract with Branagh Information Group and training from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Starting in 2016, the YoungStar evaluation criteria will include a progression of family engagement standards developed by a cross-sector workgroup and the RTT-ELC Family Engagement Analyst. Providers will be required to meet these standards starting in 2017. Data collection was completed and analysis was started on the YoungStar validation study. The results of this study will help Wisconsin evaluate the effectiveness of YoungStar.

In order to help parents and families become engaged in the role they play in providing and selecting high-quality early care, work has continued on the YoungStar media campaign. Three videos highlighting YoungStar and the importance of early brain development were created, improvements were made to the YoungStar website, and a paid media campaign will begin in the spring of 2015. To help ensure that all children have access to high-quality early care, outreach efforts continue to increase the YoungStar participation of Head Start, tribal child care providers, Licensed Day Camps, and 4KCA. ("4KCA" stands for "4-Year-Old Kindergarten Community Approaches." In 4KCA programs, public schools and community child care programs form partnerships to provide high-quality programming for four-year-olds.)

RTT-ELC offered child care providers many opportunities in 2014 to increase the quality of the care they provide Wisconsin's children. The Educational Opportunities Grant is giving child care providers across the state access to credit-based instruction at no cost; 263 T.E.A.C.H. scholarships were provided with RTT-ELC funds; Registry Coupons allowed child care providers to obtain Registry Career Levels at no cost; 1,059 hours of on-site technical consultation were provided in addition to the standard YoungStar hours; and new training and technical assistance opportunities are being created for child care providers serving children with special needs or disabilities and their families.

In addition to directly improving the quality of early care and education (ECE), in 2014 RTT-ELC helped to strengthen and align the overall ECE system in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's ECE system has many components, and RTT-ELC has given these components the opportunity to come together in order to build and align their many working pieces. This includes the creation of the Tribal-State Relations Work Group with members from the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. (GLITC), the creation of an Online Professional Development System Portfolio, the completion of the Wisconsin Core Competencies for Professionals Working with Young Children and Their Families, and continued work on the collaboration between 4K and YoungStar.

A challenge to building an improved system of early childhood in Wisconsin during year one was the creation of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (EC IDS). Loss of critical staff slowed progress on many of the

activities related to the creation of the EC IDS. With the help of the Early Learning Challenge (ELC) State Support Team, the EC IDS staff from all three State agencies came together, drafted a new mission and goals statement, revised the scope of work, and began meeting as cross-agency workgroups again.