



FUNDING TO EXCEED

SUSTAINING A WORLD-CLASS EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM
THAT SUPPORTS THE WELL-BEING AND SCHOOL READINESS
OF RHODE ISLAND'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early brain development sets the foundation for future learning, behavior, and health. Neuroscientific research indicates that a large majority of human brain development occurs by age 5 and that environmental conditions during these early years profoundly influence how the brain “wires” to provide either a strong or weak foundation for future learning and success.¹ Given this research, it is not surprising that investments in high-quality early care and education have been shown to close achievement gaps between low- and higher-income children.² These investments produce large returns to society by reducing grade retention, increasing earnings, and lowering rates of incarceration and health problems as children grow into adulthood.³

The impact of early experiences on a child’s future learning and success was the driving factor behind Congress’s decision to authorize the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant program. RTT–ELC grants support states in developing integrated, cohesive early childhood systems of high-quality programs and services. In 2011, Rhode Island was one of the first states in the country to win an RTT–ELC grant. The \$50 million award from this highly competitive federal grant program not only validated the strong foundational system of early care and education that Rhode Island had created prior to receiving the grant, but it also affirmed the state’s vision for how the system should continue to improve. Rhode Island used the grant to implement a number of projects that have strengthened the state’s early care and education system. The projects were designed to work in a highly coordinated manner to promote the well-being and school readiness of all of the state’s young children, especially those most at risk.

With the RTT–ELC grant coming to an end, the state must now find ways of sustaining this critical work in the absence of federal grant funding. The sustainability of the state’s RTT–ELC initiatives has taken on added significance in light of the prominent role that early childhood education plays as a key priority in Rhode Island’s 2020 vision for education.⁴ Accordingly, this report provides an overview of the Rhode Island RTT–ELC model and offers recommendations for sustaining initiatives in the absence of RTT–ELC funding. The report has three goals:

1. To describe the projects funded under the grant; the outcomes associated with those projects; and the implications for early childhood programs, professionals, and children if the projects are not sustained;
2. To identify each project’s need for sustainability and the overall amount of annual funding necessary to sustain the work; and
3. To recommend funding sources that can be used to sustain the projects.

To achieve these goals, the report uses three sources of information:

1. RTT–ELC and other policy and administrative documents: The state’s Early Learning Council strategic plan, the RTT–ELC application, quarterly and annual federal progress reports, budget updates, needs assessments, and project evaluations were analyzed.
2. Interviews with those involved in the implementation of RTT–ELC projects: In-person and phone interviews were conducted with state-agency staff members, leaders of community-based organizations responsible for implementing one or more of the RTT–ELC projects, and early childhood advocates.
3. A stakeholder survey: Members of Rhode Island’s broader early childhood community were asked to complete an online survey about the impact of the RTT–ELC grant and priorities for sustainability.

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¹See, for example, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

²See for example, Duncan, G. J. and Sojourner, A. J. (2013). “Can Intensive Early Childhood Intervention Programs Eliminate Income-Based Cognitive and Achievement Gaps?” *Journal of Human Resources*: 48:945-968.

³Heckman, James J. (1999). “Policies to Foster Human Capital.” National Bureau of Economic Research: Working Paper 7288.

⁴Rhode Island Council on Elementary & Secondary Education (August 2015). *2020 Vision for Education: Rhode Island’s Strategic Plan for PK-12 & Adult Education, 2015–2020*.

Findings

Rhode Island's RTT–ELC model is called *Exceed*. The model consists of a coordinated set of initiatives that work together to ensure that all children, especially at-risk children, have access to high-quality early learning programs. The strength of the model rests in the connection among three sets of standards and the supports that are offered to meet the standards. With RTT–ELC grant funding, the state created (or significantly revised) standards for the early childhood workforce, for early care and education programs, and for the learning and development of Rhode Island's children. With new standards in place, the state used grant funding to provide aligned supports to programs, early learning professionals, and children and families so that the high expectations articulated in the standards could be met.

The Exceed model is organized around four major goals:

Goal 1: Supporting a skilled early childhood workforce

Through the grant, the state redesigned its workforce and professional development system. The system now more efficiently works to increase the expertise of early learning professionals by targeting the key knowledge and competencies that promote young children's healthy development and learning. The state developed Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks that articulate the essential skills and knowledge that early learning professionals and those who work with them need to know, understand, and be able to do. The state spent over \$17 million of the grant on supports to help early learning professionals progress toward meeting the new expectations. These supports included increased access to formal educational programs designed to help educators obtain associate's and bachelor's degrees as well as increased access to other high-quality professional development services. The state piloted an innovative, research-based early childhood bachelor's degree program at Rhode Island College designed to address the needs of professionals currently working in the field. In addition, the state provided financial support through the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program to allow current early learning professionals to attend associate's and bachelor's degree programs across the state. The state also funded adult education and English as a second language courses for early care and education providers; increased the capacity of certificate programs at the Community College of Rhode Island; and established the Center for Early Learning Professionals, a professional development hub that provides high-quality training at no cost to early learning professionals that is aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks.

Goal 2: Improving the quality of early care and education programs

The state also used grant funding to offer a set of coordinated supports that work to improve the quality of early care and education programs. To better define and measure program quality, Rhode Island created a continuum of program standards that includes the state's child care licensing regulations; basic education program regulations; BrightStars, the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS); and the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Approval Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten classrooms. Nearly \$14 million in grant funding was used for supports to early care and education programs to improve their quality and progress toward meeting these new standards. These supports, which work in conjunction with the workforce supports discussed above, included funding to engage programs in BrightStars and support movement up the BrightStars rating scale and toward CECE Program Approval; facility improvement and technical assistance grants, program quality improvement grants, quality awards to offset the costs of higher-quality care, and Rising Star awards to incentivize quality improvement efforts.

Goal 3: Providing important supports to at-risk children and families

A third set of initiatives directly affect at-risk children and their families, with a focus on understanding and responding to the specific developmental needs of each child. The state created a continuum of early learning and development standards for children from birth to age 5, which articulates common expectations for child development and learning across the state. Over \$3 million in grant funding was used to support a better understanding and assessment of child development across the state, and stronger processes and more effective interventions for children with developmental delays. The state funded a statewide screening and response initiative for pediatricians who serve a large percentage

of children with high needs, the development of a unified comprehensive assessment system for children in Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), initiatives to educate providers and families on child development and learning, and new initiatives to improve assessment of children in early childhood programs and to create a development and learning profile for children to be used across the state at kindergarten entry.

Goal 4: Improving coordination, administration, and the availability of data

Finally, the state used the RTT-ELC grant to develop key foundational components of the state system. Over \$15 million was used to develop mechanisms for greater coordination and aligned vision and messaging across the agencies that administer the state’s early childhood programs. This funding was dedicated to developing an integrated data system to facilitate the sharing of information and data-driven decision making, grant management, and administrative positions throughout the agencies to ensure that the initiatives were implemented effectively and to ensure compliance with the federal requirements of the RTT-ELC program.

RTT-ELC Expenditures and the Annual Funding Necessary for Sustainability

Table ES.1 provides information on the funding for the goal areas, the projects that require sustainability funds, and the annual amount it will cost to sustain them. Additional tables provide details about each initiative, including what was achieved with the funding and the implications for early childhood programs, professionals, and children if the initiatives are not sustained. Table ES.1 indicates that the \$50 million RTT-ELC investment will require slightly over \$6.8 million annually to sustain the implementation of key activities after the grant period. The state hopes to secure over \$1.9 million from federal sources, leaving \$4.9 million as the state share. Table ES.2 lists the RTT-ELC projects that do not require sustainability funds.

Sources of Sustainability Funding

The tables in the body of the report identify potential federal, state, philanthropic, and other sustainability funding sources. These sources are discussed below.

Federal Funding

Child Care and Development Block Grant

In November of 2014, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was reauthorized, putting in place new requirements for state funding for child care subsidies and quality improvements. Many of these new requirements are already being addressed in Rhode Island by changes resulting from the state’s RTT-ELC initiatives. The new federal requirements include new health and safety licensing mandates in areas ranging from the prevention of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome to CPR training; making child care monitoring results more transparent and easily accessible; new rules for re-determining the eligibility of families receiving child care subsidies; enhanced professional development requirements; and developing strategies to increase the supply and quality of care in underserved areas for children with disabilities and children in nontraditional hours care. CCDBG is an important source of sustainability funding, given that the new law increases the minimum percentage of block grant funding that must be spent on quality initiatives from 4 percent to 9 percent of the grant over a 5-year period. In state fiscal years 2016 and 2017, the minimum set-aside increases from 4 percent to 7 percent with an additional requirement to allocate 3 percent of the grant (starting in year 2) to improve the quality of infant and toddler care.⁵ Given that Rhode Island has historically demonstrated its commitment to quality by allocating slightly above the 4 percent minimum quality set-aside, the additional 3 percent increase means that approximately \$700,000 in additional CCDBG funding could potentially be used for sustaining RTT-ELC projects, as many of the initiatives align to the requirements of the new law.

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⁵The new CCDBG legislation requires that states spend the following on quality initiatives: (1) at least 7 percent in the first two fiscal years after the enactment of the Act, (2) at least 8 percent in the third and fourth fiscal years, and (3) at least 9 percent in the fifth and each succeeding year. The new law also requires states to spend, in addition, at least 3 percent of funds by the second full fiscal year after enactment, and each succeeding year, to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers.

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Table ES.1: RTT-ELC total costs and annual sustainability funding estimates by goal area

Goal Area	Total RTT-ELC Funding for Goal Area Received Over the 5-Year Grant	Projects Requiring Sustainability Funds	Sustainability Funding Required (Annual)	Anticipated FY17 Federal Support (Annual)	State Sustainability Funding Required (Annual)
Skilled Workforce	\$17,346,603	Adult Education for Early Learning Workforce Center for Early Learning Professionals Community College of Rhode Island Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning RI Early Learning and Development Standards Training T.E.A.C.H. Program	\$2,729,863	\$1,154,863	\$1,575,000
Program Quality	\$13,880,587	BrightStars (TQRIS) Facilities Fund and Technical Assistance Quality Awards/incentives Quality Improvement Grants	\$1,945,000	\$550,000	\$1,395,000
Support to Children and Families	\$3,006,375	Developmental screening and evidence-based resources Kindergarten Entry Profile	\$736,800	\$0	\$736,800
State Administration, Coordination, and Availability of Data	\$15,766,435	Administrative oversight of workforce, program quality improvement, child and family, and data initiatives Contracted data systems initiatives System coordination and alignment	\$1,448,494	\$242,440	\$1,206,054
Grand Total	\$50,000,000		\$6,860,157	\$1,947,303	\$4,912,854

Table ES.2: RTT-ELC projects not requiring sustainability funds

Activity	\$0	\$0	\$0
Comprehensive Assessment System for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education			
Early Childhood Workforce Study			
Early Intervention Assessment Support			
Fun Family Activities			
Professional Development on Assessment			
RI Early Learning and Development Standards			
TQRIS Validation Study and PD Evaluation			
Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks			
RTT-ELC Grant Communications			

Head Start–Child Care Partnerships

In addition to CCDBG funding, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has been allocating new Head Start dollars to create Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships. The funding allows Early Head Start programs to partner with child care providers to support them (through funding and program management) in meeting the Head Start Program Performance Standards and thus significantly improving their quality. In 2015, a Rhode Island Early Head Start program received \$1.9 million to support a number of child care partners in the state. The federal FY16 budget includes additional funding for these partnerships, and the state should consider applying for funding to sustain such partnerships and as a means to better coordinate Early Head Start with the RTT–ELC initiatives.

State Funding

Agency budget requests

As part of the state’s FY 2017 budget process, each agency will need to request funding to retain staff and sustain specific projects funded under the RTT–ELC grant.

Legislation

In at least one case (the Quality Awards/Rising Stars award payments), sustainability will require new legislation and appropriations for tiered subsidy reimbursements.

Social Impact Bonds

Given that a number of the initiatives developed through the RTT–ELC grant will provide a significant return to the state through a reduction in a child’s need for special services later on and through higher lifetime earnings, these initiatives are candidates for social impact bond investments. Social impact bonds are funded by private investors who seek a return on the savings that social programs like high-quality early childhood education achieve by reducing the need for more expensive social services later. Social impact bonds are currently being used to fund early childhood programs in a small number of localities across the country.

Facilities Bonds

States like Massachusetts have used public bond financing for capital improvements to child care programs serving at-risk children. This funding vehicle is an excellent source of revenue for sustaining the facilities improvement and technical assistance that are critically needed in the state.

Philanthropic Support

A number of large foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in early childhood initiatives ranging from family engagement to prekindergarten programming. Rhode Island philanthropic partners have already played a significant role in establishing key components of the state’s early care and education infrastructure, including BrightStars, the Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund, and T.E.A.C.H. Local philanthropic organizations like the Rhode Island Foundation, the United Way of Rhode Island, and Hasbro Children’s Fund can be sources of sustainability funding for RTT–ELC projects that align with foundation goals.

Shared Services

It addition, it is recommended that the state examine a shared services alliance model to better coordinate existing resources. Shared services alliance models use financially stable nonprofit organizations to act as hub agencies that form networks of independent child care centers and family child care providers. Providers retain their autonomy but attain economies of scale in purchasing, marketing, human resources, and other business operations by coordinating these functions through the nonprofit hub.

Implications if RTT-ELC Projects Are Not Sustained

Children’s early experiences are critical to their future success in school and in life. This success is highly dependent on the type and quality of a child’s early experiences. Through the RTT-ELC grant, Rhode Island invested in the development of an early childhood system that supports high-quality experiences for all children. The strength of Rhode Island’s RTT-ELC model is the link between higher workforce, program, and early learning and development standards and the supports that are provided to meet the standards. If funding is not dedicated to sustaining the supports, Rhode Island’s early care and education system will have a foundation of high standards but no support for practitioners and other stakeholders to meet them. The quality of early care and education programs will not improve, there will be limited opportunities for early learning professionals to enhance their knowledge and skills, children will not be connected to necessary interventions, and child outcomes will suffer. Equally troubling is that the state will not have successfully leveraged the significant federal investment made through the RTT-ELC grant to create and maintain a high-quality early care and education system.

Conclusion

A phenomenal amount of work has been accomplished under Rhode Island’s RTT-ELC grant. The model was well-conceived, and the implementation has been successful, with a number of positive workforce-, program-, and child-level outcomes clearly resulting from the work. Nevertheless, it is important to note that building a world-class early childhood system takes time. Although much has been accomplished, the work will need to continue after the grant period to realize the state’s ultimate vision and outcomes. The \$50 million infusion of federal funds over 5 years has enabled the state to enhance its early learning system through better agency coordination; data integration; and high-quality workforce, program, and early learning standards. These standards set high expectations, but it is the ongoing monetary, professional development, and technical assistance supports that help practitioners meet those standards. As part of the state’s FY 2017 budget process, a budget proposal was sent to the Governor’s Office to support the full sustainability funding request.. These supports must be sustained to ensure that children in Rhode Island have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

"The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge has greatly accelerated our progress in building an early learning system for Rhode Island that will result in improved child outcomes. It has been a major undertaking, from the research to the design to implementing new ways to increase the quality of and connections among early learning and development programs for greater overall impact. We need to build on this progress and keep this work rolling full steam ahead to ensure that Rhode Island's youngest children have a strong start."

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, Co-Chair Rhode Island Early Learning Council

INTRODUCTION

Although every adult has experienced childhood, all early childhood experiences are not the same. Many children—from low- and high-income families alike—experience a childhood of good health, positive relationships, and access to high-quality early care and education. However, too many children grow up under difficult circumstances where they are exposed to a depressed, stressed, or even abusive caregiver; inadequate health care and social service support; and low-quality early learning environments. A convincing body of research has found that these early experiences profoundly influence a child's future success in school and in life.⁶

The mounting evidence that early experiences impact future success has created a growing national awareness of the importance of high-quality early care and education. In 2011, Congress authorized the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant program to support states in developing an integrated, cohesive system of high-quality early learning programs and services. The goal of the grant program is to close educational gaps between low- and higher-income children by improving the quality of early learning programs and increasing the number of children with high needs⁷ who have access to high-quality early care and education. RTT–ELC focuses on five core areas: (1) state-level coordination and collaboration, (2) measuring and supporting the quality of early childhood programs, (3) promoting early learning and child outcomes, (4) workforce development, and (5) measuring outcomes and state progress.

Rhode Island was one of the first states in the country to win an RTT–ELC grant. The \$50 million award from this highly competitive federal program not only validated the strong foundation of early care and education that the state had created, but it also affirmed the state's vision for how the system should continue to improve. Over the last 5 years, Rhode Island has used the \$50 million award to implement a number of projects that further strengthen the state's early care and education system. Now, with the state nearing the end of the grant period, it is important to create a plan for sustaining the work without RTT–ELC funding.

Purpose and Methods

This report provides information about how to sustain the early childhood initiatives funded under the state's federal RTT–ELC grant. To consider sustainability, it is important that state leaders and stakeholders clearly and objectively understand what was accomplished with the grant funding, the outcomes that were achieved, the need for each RTT–ELC project going forward, the amount of sustainability funding required, and potential sources of sustainability funding. Accordingly, this report has three overarching goals:

1. To describe the projects funded under the grant; the outcomes associated with those projects; and the implications for teachers, children, and families if the projects are not sustained;

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⁶See, for example: Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., 2011. The Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, The Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, and The Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. "The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress," *Pediatrics*, 129, 232–246. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-2663

⁷"Children with High Needs" is defined by the RTT–ELC program as "children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from low-income families or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on Indian lands... and who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care."The state may include additional categories under this definition.

2. To identify each project’s need for sustainability and the overall amount of annual funding necessary to sustain the work; and
3. To recommend funding sources that can be used to sustain the projects.

To meet these goals, three sources of information were collected, reviewed, and analyzed. The methods for collecting and analyzing information worked to ensure an accurate description of each RTT–ELC project. Broad input on the benefits of RTT–ELC initiatives was sought from multiple stakeholders, ranging from representatives of state agencies to practitioners. These data sources are discussed in more detail below.

Document Review

The projects implemented through Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant are well-documented. The state’s Early Learning Council strategic plan, the RTT–ELC application, and the quarterly and annual progress reports and budget updates to federal project officers provide important information on the genesis and evolution of the state’s grant. In addition, a number of the implementing community-based organizations (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Education Development Center, etc.) have conducted needs assessments and evaluations related to their work. These documents were analyzed for this report. Appendix A provides a full list of the documents that were reviewed.

Interviews

To obtain input from those involved in implementing the RTT–ELC projects, in-person and phone interviews were conducted with state agency staffs, leaders of organizations responsible for one or more RTT–ELC projects, and early childhood advocates. An interview protocol was developed that captured information on the goals of each project, key benefits, the anticipated cost of sustaining the work, alternative funding sources, and the implications for children and families if the project was not sustained. Appendix B provides a list of individuals interviewed, and Appendix C presents the questions used in these interviews.

Stakeholder Survey

To ensure that the report was informed by the input of Rhode Island’s broad stakeholder community, a survey was created with a number of questions related to RTT–ELC sustainability. The survey included questions about the RTT–ELC projects that had the greatest impact on the stakeholders’ work; the projects that were most important to them; and their perception of the overall impact of the RTT–ELC projects on program and teacher quality and on child outcomes for various subgroups of children with high needs (children who are dual-language learners, children in poverty, and children with disabilities). Respondents were also asked about what would happen if no sustainability funding is secured. Appendix D presents the stakeholder survey questions.

A link to the survey was sent to each of the 150 members of Rhode Island’s Early Learning Council, included in the state early childhood newsletter, and posted on the state’s Web site. In addition, social media were used to promote the survey, including posts on the state’s early childhood Facebook page and Twitter account. Dissemination of the survey helped ensure that all Rhode Island early childhood stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input.

Understanding Exceed: Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC Model

Rhode Island’s multi-agency collaborative model for implementing the RTT–ELC grant is called *Exceed*. For over a decade prior to receiving the RTT–ELC grant, Rhode Island had been building a state early childhood system based on research and best practice. In 2010, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided funding to the Rhode Island Early Learning Council (mandated by the 2007 Head Start Act) which allowed the state to set up a collaborative process to advise the Governor on a vision for a coordinated early childhood system that brings child development and education together with child health. The resulting vision set the foundation for the Exceed model and was a contributing factor in the state’s success in winning the RTT–ELC grant.

The initiatives proposed in Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant application were not simply a response to a federal grant announcement; they articulated an existing vision developed collaboratively through an administrative structure of state agencies, advocacy organizations, early childhood groups, and practitioners coordinated through the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. The RTT–ELC grant did not change the state’s approach to its early childhood systems-building efforts, but it accelerated the state’s work toward its vision for a coordinated infrastructure that provides all children, and especially at-risk children, with access to high-quality early learning programs.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the Exceed RTT–ELC model. At the base of the model are three foundational components of the early care and education system: (1) processes for the **coordinated administration** of early childhood programs across the five state agencies with defined procedures for stakeholder input; (2) a **data system** that pulls information from the state’s various data sources to support decision making at the state level; (3) new sets of common **standards** that include competencies for the early learning professionals, quality standards for programs, and expectations for children’s development and learning. Next, the state used grant funding to put in place a number **supports** designed to help early learning professionals, programs, and children meet the new expectations. These elements of Exceed—coordinated administration, the integration of data, shared high standards, and supports—have positively affected the state in a variety of ways. The **impacts** include a more qualified early childhood workforce; higher quality early learning programs; a greater awareness among families of the importance of early childhood development and learning, better and more ubiquitous early screening practices among health providers and schools, stronger transitions between early childhood programs and the K–12 system, and the improved school readiness of Rhode Island’s youngest children. Each element of the model is discussed in more detail below.

Aligned Early Childhood Program Implementation Through Coordinated Administration

As in every state, funding for early childhood programs and services in Rhode Island reach children and families through a number of different federal and state programs, including the Child Care and Development Block grant, Part C and Part B (Section 619) of the Individuals with

Figure 1. Increasing the number of high-needs children in high-quality early learning and development programs: Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC model

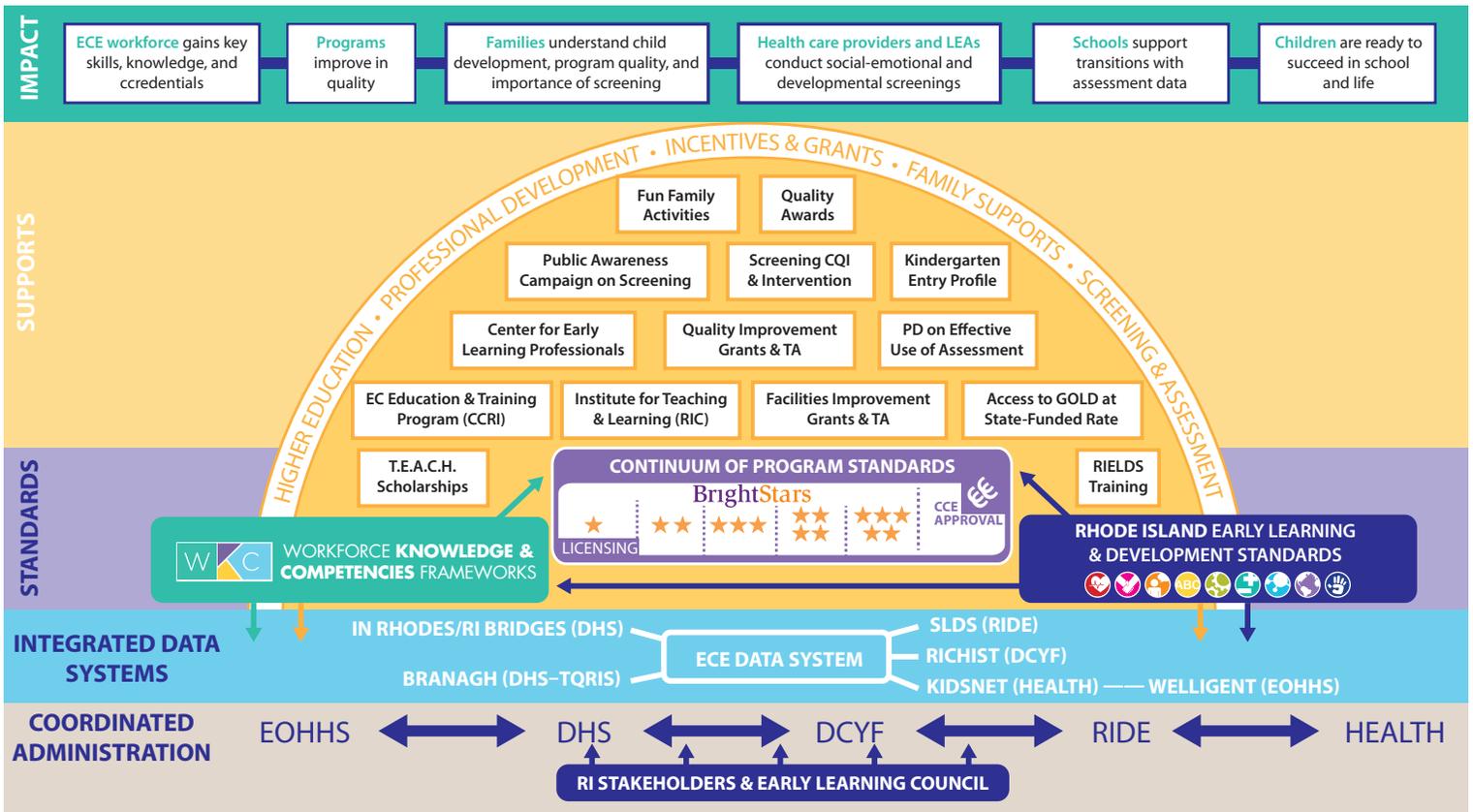


Table 1. RTT–ELC projects and lead coordinating agency

RTT–ELC Project	Agency Lead
Grant Management	Department of Education
Improving the Quality of Early Learning Programs	Department of Human Services
Establishing and Measuring Tiered Quality Program Standards	Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Using Early Learning and Development Standards	Department of Education
Developing and Supporting Effective Early Childhood Assessment	Department of Education
Early Learning Data Systems	Department of Education
Improving the Knowledge and Competencies of the Workforce	Department of Human Services

Disabilities Education Act, Head Start, the state prekindergarten program, and other programs. In Rhode Island, different state agencies have responsibility for the implementation of different programs, which have different goals, eligibility criteria, program standards, professional development and technical assistance opportunities, and data reporting and accountability measures. This siloed administration of early childhood programs creates challenges to the implementation of a cohesive, coordinated early learning system. To be successful, the agencies involved must coordinate and align the administration of their different programs, regulations, and initiatives. Without coordination, early learning professionals and families get multiple and sometimes conflicting messages about what makes a high-quality program, what professionals should know and be able to do, and how to support children’s learning and development.

Prior to the RTT–ELC grant it was challenging for all parties involved to know what to focus on and how to ensure that the highest quality expectations were being prioritized. Under the Exceed model—led by the Department of Education (RIDE)—the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS); the Department of Human Services (DHS); the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF); the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH); and RIDE worked collaboratively to implement the grant. The grant was organized into seven projects, each managed by a Core Project Management Team (see Table 1) and led by a specified agency. Each Core Team consisted of relevant staff members from each agency and included a liaison to the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. Each Core Team was responsible for designing and overseeing the implementation of project activities and reporting on the progress of activities under the team’s purview. Each team was chaired by a state employee from the agency with the most responsibility and/or expertise for the activities under a specific project. The Rhode Island RTT–ELC Grant Officer coordinated the Core Teams.

Better and More Readily Available Information Through an Integrated Data System

Not surprisingly, the fragmentation in the administration of early childhood programs results in a number of separate, agency-specific data systems that do not work together. For example, KIDSNET, Rhode Island’s child health information system contains data on immunizations and newborn screenings as well as other important child health data. RICHIST, a data system that is used by the Department of Children, Youth and Families, holds information on the licensing status of the state’s child care programs. However, to begin to understand what affects children, it is important to know the cumulative impact of the health history of a child, the quality of early childhood programs attended, and other information about the child’s early experiences. Historically, the fragmentation of data in Rhode Island has not allowed state administrators to look at all of the important factors that affect children’s well-being. This fact has negatively affected the state’s ability to make data-driven policy investments.

Accordingly, a key aspect of the Exceed model is the development of a newly integrated state-wide data system. The state’s work in this area includes the development of new system components and the integration of the currently existing data systems. New components include a data platform (with search functionality) that contains information on early learning programs, a workforce registry, a renewal system for child care licensing, and a repository for developmental screening and Kindergarten Entry Profile data. Children, teachers, and programs are assigned unique identifiers, allowing state administrators to link child-, teacher-, and program-level data to understand a child’s characteristics, the characteristics of the teacher and early childhood settings the child has experienced, and the resulting outcomes. The system is linked to the state’s K–12 data system to create a seamless birth-to-college system.

Shared, Higher Expectations for Programs, the Workforce, and Children Through New Standards

An important aspect of the RTT–ELC grant was the development and implementation of an interrelated set of standards that define the expectations for different parts of the state’s early care and education system. New *early learning and development standards* identify the progression of knowledge and skills that are the foundational building blocks for children’s school readiness. Similarly, the knowledge and skills that educators and those who work with educators need in order to support child outcomes are defined in the state’s *workforce knowledge and competencies frameworks*. Finally, Rhode Island’s *continuum of program standards* define and measure indicators of program quality that are associated with children’s early learning and development outcomes, including the teacher qualifications and professional development services that support workforce knowledge and competencies.

Early Learning and Development Standards

Early learning and development standards articulate expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages before entering school. *Rhode Island’s Early Learning and Development Standards* are guidelines for administrators, practitioners, and parents as they make decisions that affect children’s experiences both in early care and education settings and at home. Rhode Island’s standards address all domains of learning and development, including physical health and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, literacy, cognitive development, mathematics, science, social studies, and creative arts. For each learning goal in these domains, a birth-to-age 5 progression is presented with developmental benchmarks at 9, 18, 24, 36, 48, and 60 months. The standards are accompanied by supplemental information that offers guidance on the appropriate use of the standards; discusses how the standards support children with disabilities and dual-language learners; and highlights the importance of relationships, play, and intentional teaching in early childhood settings.

Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks

The Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks articulate the essential skills and knowledge that educators and those who work with educators need to know, understand, and be able to do to promote young children’s healthy development and learning. Rhode Island’s approach to developing competencies is unique in that it has created different—yet interrelated—frameworks for key roles in the early childhood field, including teachers, teacher assistants, early childhood special education teachers, early intervention specialists, family child care educators, professional development providers (including higher education faculty and staff), administrators, and education coordinators. Each framework covers a set of domains relevant to particular roles in the early childhood workforce. For example, for those professionals working directly with children, domains include family engagement, curriculum, and assessment. For professional development providers and higher education faculty and staff, domains include supporting adult learners, building relationships, and evaluating outcomes. The competencies are organized into a series of progressions describing levels of increasing skill and knowledge in key areas. Early stages correspond with foundational knowledge and understanding in a particular area. At the highest level of competency, professionals reflect critically on their knowledge, solve problems, mentor, and advocate for change. Early childhood professionals develop and refine their skills to advance from one level to the next through a combination of formal education, experience, and other professional development.

Program Standards

Program quality standards play a key role in defining, measuring, and holding providers accountable for the quality of early learning experiences offered in Rhode Island’s early care and education settings. Historically, Rhode Island has had four different sets of program quality standards administered by two different state agencies and one community-based organization through a state contract. As part of an ambitious plan to increase the number of disadvantaged children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs, the state initiated a process that resulted in a continuum of aligned program quality standards including child care licensing regulations, basic education program regulations, the BrightStars Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS), and the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Approval standards. The continuum provides a common definition of program quality that can be more easily articulated to parents and policymakers and creates an incentive for all types of early childhood providers, regardless of setting, to strive for higher quality. Equally important, the continuum creates a

higher “floor” of quality through a revision of the state’s child care licensing requirements to better protect the health and safety of children in early childhood settings. The continuum also clearly defines the highest levels of quality, using the program and provider characteristics that matter most to supporting school readiness and closing achievement gaps.

Supports for Meeting the Higher Standards

A key element in the success of the state’s RTT–ELC grant implementation is the strong connection between the higher expectations articulated in the standards and the supports that the state provided to meet those expectations. For example, while the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks articulate expectations for different roles in the early childhood workforce, the state funded supports through RTT–ELC to help meet those expectations. For instance, the state funded the Center for Early Learning Professionals to provide training, the Institute for Teaching and Learning to support practitioners in obtaining a bachelor’s degree, T.E.A.C.H scholarships to offset the cost of tuition and fund substitute teachers, and the Early Childhood Education and Training Program at the Community College of Rhode Island as a first step for professionals to earn initial college credits. Similarly, while program standards set expectations for higher increments of program quality, the state provided quality awards and program improvement grants to support programs in moving up the continuum of program standards. Finally, multiple levels of training on the new Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) was made available to early childhood educators and administrators as well as to parents and other community agencies so that they can help children meet the expectations in the RIELDS.

The connection between higher standards and the RTT–ELC-funded supports is particularly important to a discussion of sustainability. In the absence of RTT–ELC funding for program, teacher, and child supports, the state is left with a set of higher expectations but no way to meet them.

RTT-ELC Impact

Figure 2 outlines the impact that Exceed has had on Rhode Island’s early care and education system, as well as on the children and families that the system serves. The activities of the Exceed model focus on programs, professionals, families, and children so the description of the impacts is organized that way below.

Impact on the Early Childhood Workforce

A large portion of the RTT–ELC grant has been allocated for activities designed to improve the early childhood workforce. These are the results of the activities:

- 1,308 early learning professionals were trained on the RI Early Learning and Development Standards;
- 40 current practitioners are enrolled in a newly created bachelor’s degree program at Rhode Island College;
- 2,015 early learning professionals received training and technical assistance from the Center on Early Learning Professionals;
- 460 practitioners have accessed the Community College of Rhode Island’s Early Childhood Education and Training Program, and 137 have completed the program; and
- 107 scholars were enrolled in T.E.A.C.H. as of the fall of 2015, and 21 completed an associate’s degree as of December 2015.

Impact on the Early Childhood Programs

Early childhood programs were also recipients of RTT–ELC supports. These supports resulted in the following:

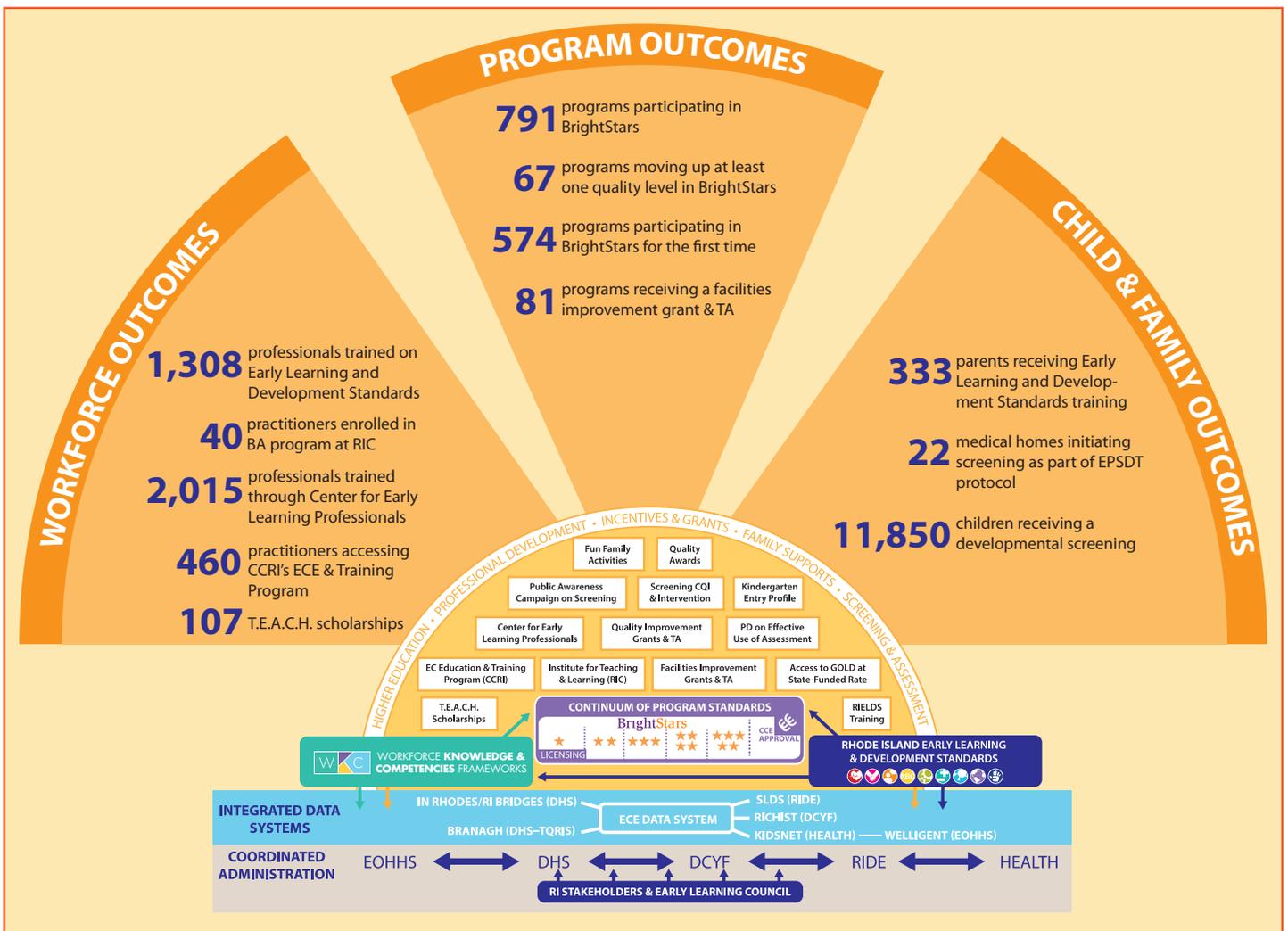
- 791 programs are participating in BrightStars,
- 67 programs moved up at least one quality level in BrightStars,
- 574 programs participated in BrightStars for the first time, and
- 81 programs improved their facilities through a facilities improvement grant and technical assistance.

Impact on Children and Families

Finally, the ultimate goal of the RTT-ELC grant is to improve the well-being of Rhode Island’s children and families. The impact on children and families includes the following:

- 333 parents received training on the state’s early learning and development standards;
- 22 medical homes initiated developmental and social–emotional screening as part of their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment protocol; and
- 11,850 children received a developmental screening.

Figure 2. Impact of Rhode Island’s RTT-ELC grant on workforce, program, and child outcomes



“[Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge] is the catalyst that has brought professionalism to the field of early care and education in Rhode Island. It is what...most of us have waited for, for a very long time—to be recognized for the hard work that we do and to get additional funding to help us do it. It has done nothing but help us improve.”

Patty Carbone

*Director, Sandpipers Early Learning Center
Chair, Child Care Director’s Association*

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

Throughout the entire RTT–ELC grant period, Rhode Island placed a high priority on obtaining stakeholder input to inform decision making. The decisions related to RTT–ELC sustainability were no exception. To obtain stakeholder input, a survey was disseminated to the Rhode Island early childhood community in April of 2015. The survey requested information on the ways in which RTT–ELC funding had impacted the work of stakeholders and on the implications for programs, professionals, and children if the various RTT–ELC projects were not sustained. The results of the survey are presented below.

There are a number of points to keep in mind about the survey results. First, the survey consists of a self-selected sample of 104 respondents.⁸ A link to the survey was disseminated widely across the state, and each stakeholder decided whether or not to respond. As such, it is likely that the pool of survey respondents consists of individuals who feel strongly about the RTT–ELC grant or who had a specific interest in one or more of the projects. Second, the state was still in the process of implementing the grant at the time of the survey, so some of the projects that rolled out later were only beginning to affect stakeholders. In some cases, a finding of low impact could be a result of when the project was implemented and not the actual impact of the initiative. Third, some of the initiatives targeted small but important groups, and those stakeholders who were not part of the targeted group might have been likely to indicate that the project did not have an impact.

Survey respondents were asked to rank the initiatives from most to least important. Table 2 presents the average ranking of each initiative by the 65 respondents who answered this question. Respondents considered the quality improvement grants to be the most important (with an average rank of 5.74). This finding is not surprising because the quality improvement grants were a one-time allocation of funding to be used for any number of program quality enhancements ranging from new materials to staff incentives. Training on the early learning and development standards training also ranked highly, along with the facilities improvement grants, developmental screening, and professional development from the Center for Early Learning Professionals. Initiatives that had not been fully implemented yet, like the state data system, as well as initiatives impacting a small number of stakeholders (RIC courses) received the lowest rating.

Finally, survey respondents were asked a set of open-ended questions related to the impact of the RTT–ELC grant on children and about “what will happen in the absence of RTT–ELC funding if no sustainability funding is identified.” With only two exceptions (out of 22 respondents), the open-end responses were positive regarding the RTT–ELC grant’s impact on program quality.⁹ Stakeholders discussed how the RTT–ELC grant has made Rhode Island’s early childhood system more aligned and intentional. The free and easily accessed professional development opportunities helped administrators recognize the importance of quality and motivated them to work toward higher quality, and training improved teaching practices. With regard to the impact on child outcomes, the stakeholders mentioned that RTT–ELC was the start of the systems-building work in Rhode Island and that changes are producing strong outcomes for children. Children are benefiting

⁸A respondent is defined as an individual who answered at least one question on the survey. Sixty-seven people submitted complete surveys, and 37 answered at least one question but did not complete the survey. Statistics in the text include the number of respondents for the question on which the statistic is based.

⁹One responded called the impact “minimal” and the second responded, “I’m unsure that it has had a tremendous impact on the quality of early childhood teachers overall.”

Table 2. Average ranking of RTT–ELC initiatives from most to least important (top 15 initiatives)

Overall Rank	RTT–ELC Project	Average Ranking
1	Quality Improvement Grants	5.74
2	Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards Training	7.60
3	Facilities Improvement Grants	7.69
4	Developmental Screening	7.72
5	Professional Development from the Center for Early Learning Professionals	8.30
6	BrightStars Rating	8.57
7	Interagency Coordination	8.72
8	Technical Assistance from the Center for Early Learning Professionals	9.40
9	Screening-Public Awareness	9.55
10	Professional Development on Assessment	9.88
11	Certificate Program at Community College of Rhode Island	9.91
12	Quality Awards	9.91
13	Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning Pilot Rhode Island College	11.18
14	TSI GOLD at State Rate	11.29
15	Data Systems	11.41

from better materials in the classroom, more intentional teaching, and the overall recognition by the state that early childhood years are important. Two respondents pointed out that it will be the data that ultimately answers this question.

Rhode Island stakeholders were also vocal about the implications of not having funds to sustain the work accomplished through the grant and the way it would affect progress toward realizing the state’s vision of a comprehensive high-quality system. Implications included a drop in quality and a slide back into a fragmented early childhood system. One respondent noted the connection between the grants’ higher standards and the supports, and how the Rhode Island early childhood community would not be able to meet the challenging standards that have been put in place without continued funding. Overall, the concern about sustainability focused on going back to the pre- RTT–ELC model, which was seen by respondents as less beneficial than Exceed.

SUSTAINABILITY AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The \$50 million RTT–ELC grant was initially a 4-year award. In June 2015, the state received a 1-year, no-cost extension to complete the state’s work, making the average expenditure \$10 million per year over a 5-year period. The funding was not evenly distributed across the years because certain projects relied on the implementation of other projects before they could be initiated. For example, the state did not obtain the expected enrollment of T.E.A.C.H. scholars in the bachelor’s program until late in the grant period because the Institute for Teaching and Learning at Rhode Island College, the state’s early childhood bachelor’s degree program for which the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships would be used, did not start enrolling students until well into the grant period.

Information related to sustainability and funding recommendations is summarized in tables below. As discussed in the introductory section, the Exceed model is comprised of a coordinated set of initiatives that are designed to work together to ensure that all children, and especially at-risk children, have access to high-quality early learning programs. The Exceed projects are grouped according to the way they work together to promote the major goals of the model, which include: (1) supporting a skilled early childhood workforce; (2) improving the quality of early care and education programs; (3) providing important supports to at-risk children and families; and (4) improving coordination, administration and the availability of data. For each goal area, the sustainability and funding recommendations include a brief explanation of how the activities work together to meet the overarching goal and how each specific goal area is connected to the others to form a comprehensive system of early care and education. The tables then present information for five key questions related to sustainability:

1. *How much did the state spend on the project?* RTT–ELC budget documents were consulted to determine the exact amount spent on the project. The first column presents the amount spent over the life of the grant and, where possible, the average annual expenditure.
2. *What did the state achieve through the project?* The second column of each table contains information on what the state “bought” with the RTT–ELC allocation for each project. The information comes from a document review, interviews with agency staff and implementing organizations, and the stakeholder survey.
3. *Does the project require sustainability funds?* Using information from agency staff, the recommendations of the organizations implementing the RTT–ELC projects, and stakeholder input, a sustainability recommendation is provided in the third column. In some cases, a short justification is included.
4. *What are the potential sources of sustainability?* Using information from the interviews of agency staff and the implementing organizations, as well as research on other state models, the fourth column identifies potential sources of funding.
5. *What happens in the absence of sustainability funding?* Finally, using information from the implementing organizations and stakeholder interviews, the implications of not obtaining sustainability funding are discussed in the fifth column.

Sustainability and Funding Recommendations for Goal 1: Supporting a Skilled Early Childhood Workforce

A key component of Rhode Island’s Exceed model is grounded in a large body of research that shows how young children thrive when the adults who are responsible for them are knowledgeable about, and trained to support, their development and learning. Historically, Rhode Island pieced together funding for workforce and professional development initiatives using Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) quality set-aside dollars, other federal funding such as Early Reading First and Early Childhood Educator Professional Development grants, and some state dollars. The funding supported an Early Learning Resource and Referral Center that coordinated the state’s professional development opportunities, training on the state’s early learning standards, and other professional development initiatives. Although the state had great aspirations for a fully developed early childhood workforce development system, it took the RTT–ELC investment to make significant progress toward its ultimate vision.

The vision articulated in Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant application was to redesign the state’s workforce and professional development system to “support the adults who educate and nurture infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families. . . ; [to] advance their skills and knowledge; and

develop sustainable careers.”¹ Decades of research have provided the field with a clear understanding of the most important knowledge and skills that teachers must have to support a child’s success. The ultimate goal of the state’s workforce and professional development initiatives is to clearly articulate the knowledge and competencies necessary to support the development and learning of young children, and to create a system that included both formal education and professional development services to support early educators in meeting the competencies. The supports were designed not only to align to workforce knowledge and competencies, but to move early learning professionals forward along a continuum of increasing knowledge and skills.

Accordingly, the initial RTT–ELC work in this goal area focused on using research to develop multiple Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks, which articulate the essential skills and knowledge that educators, and those who work with educators, need to know, understand, and be able to do to promote young children’s healthy development and learning. Rhode Island defined the essential knowledge and competencies for teachers and teacher assistants, early childhood special education teachers, early intervention specialists, and family child care educators as well as for professional development providers (including higher education faculty and staff members), administrators, and education coordinators. These Frameworks chart a clear career pathway to higher levels of knowledge and skills and were a key first step in the state’s effort to support the adults caring for and educating the state’s youngest children.

Next, the state identified a number of key investments that would significantly increase the expertise of early learning professionals by improving their knowledge and competencies. These investments focused on increasing access to formal educational credentials and on increasing access to high-quality ongoing professional development. Over \$17 million was spent on these supports to help the state’s early learning professionals acquire the knowledge and skills defined by the Frameworks. Specifically, these investments included expanding access to learning opportunities by

- establishing the Center for Early Learning Professionals, which offers high-quality professional development services and technical assistance at no cost to early educators;
- providing financial supports for tuition and books so early childhood educators can attend associate’s and bachelor’s degree programs (T.E.A.C.H. program);
- increasing the capacity of the Level One early childhood educator program aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks (Community College of Rhode Island);
- piloting the Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning, a program designed to advance the educational attainment of teachers already in the workforce (at Rhode Island College);
- offering adult education classes for the early learning workforce; and
- providing training on the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.

Although these initiatives are important in themselves, they work in conjunction with the state’s other RTT–ELC projects and are critical to the overall goal of ensuring that more at-risk children are in higher-quality early learning settings across the state. Indeed, teacher quality is perhaps the most critical aspect of program quality, and is also the most important factor in promoting stronger child outcomes.

Nine RTT-ELC projects were funded under this goal. Six projects require sustainability funding. These are

- Center for Early Learning Professionals,
- T.E.A.C.H. program,

.....

¹Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Application, page 195.

- Community College of Rhode Island certificate program,
- Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Rhode Island College,
- adult education classes for the early learning workforce, and
- training on the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.

Three projects do not require sustainability funding. These are

- Early Childhood Workforce Study,
- Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks, and
- professional development on assessment (becomes responsibility of Center for Early Learning Professionals).

It is estimated that the total amount of sustainability funding required for these projects is **\$2,729,863**. Federal sources of funding (e.g., CCDBG funds) will contribute **\$1,154,863**, leaving **\$1,575,000** as the state share. Additional information is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Sustainability and funding for supporting a skilled early childhood workforce

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Early Childhood Workforce Study	\$99,904 to conduct an early childhood workforce study.	a baseline workforce report describing the characteristics of the state's early learning workforce.	No.	N/A	N/A
Workforce Knowledge & Competency Frameworks	\$128,939 to develop the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks and translate them into Spanish.	(1) a revised Framework for Early Childhood Teachers, (2) an Addendum for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE), (3) a Framework for Early Childhood Teacher Assistants, (4) a Framework for Family Child Care Educators; (5) a Framework for Professional Development Providers; and (6) a Framework for Administrators and Education Coordinators.	No.	N/A	N/A

Table 3. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Center for Early Learning Professionals—Professional Development and Technical Assistance	\$8,732,727 for a state professional development center, including over \$3.3 million for professional development and over \$5.3 million for technical assistance to child care programs for quality improvement.	a fully operational early childhood professional development center that has (1) produced and offered, on average, 21 different training series per semester (109 total from April 2014 to June 2015), each including 3 or more face-to-face sessions and supplemental on-line follow up to 2,015 early educators; (2) provided technical assistance to 363 programs; (3) distributed and monitored nearly \$6 million in quality improvement grants (see below); (4) vetted and approved nearly 200 privately offered training sessions; (5) created a data system that tracks teacher and administrator training and that can serve as the foundation of the state's workforce registry; and (6) developed and managed, in partnership with other state agencies, an InfoLine to answer stakeholder questions related to professional development services and system changes.	Yes.	Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) quality set-aside funding and state funding. In addition, the state should explore a subsidized fee-for-service model within a shared services framework. It is difficult for providers serving at-risk children to pay for training, but the cost of training can be minimized through shared services alliances and partnerships with better-resourced Head Start programs. The state should investigate shared services models nationally ² and Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships to determine whether a state-administered partnership model can help support more providers in the state.	the state would lose access to ongoing high-quality professional development services and technical assistance aligned with the state's core expectations for professionals, programs, and children. These are foundational supports of the early care and education infrastructure. Effective teacher–child interactions are at the center of improving child outcomes. The absence of sustainability resources for the Center would leave the state without a source of high-quality professional development services and a credible source of vetted training materials. The state's expectations for early childhood professionals, as articulated in the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks, would be difficult for most early childhood educators to meet without this important support. Additionally, without the Center, it will be difficult for providers serving subsidized children to meet the preservice and ongoing professional development requirements under CCDBG.

²See, for example, Stoney, Louise (2009). *Shared Services: A New Business Model to Support Scale and Sustainability in Early Care and Education*. Denver, Colorado: Early Learning Ventures. http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/downloads/2009/SharedServicesELVreport_2009.pdf

Table 3. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
T.E.A.C.H.	\$2,734,309 for the T.E.A.C.H. program, which provides scholarships for early childhood educators who wish to pursue an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education. T.E.A.C.H. heavily subsidizes tuition and the cost of books and includes paid release time (to the early childhood program), and a bonus for scholars.	107 T.E.A.C.H. scholars currently enrolled in the program (as of the fall of 2015), with 21 having completed an associate's degree (as of December 2015).	Yes.	Federal CCDBG quality set-aside dollars, state pre-K funding, and philanthropic funding. States commonly use these funding sources to support early childhood professionals in obtaining and associate's or bachelor's degrees.	few early childhood educators would be able to obtain an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Access to formal education designed to support the development of teachers is a key component of improving the expertise of the workforce and the quality of early learning programs. The average T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipient makes \$12.06 per hour. Most do not qualify for financial aid and cannot afford to pay for higher education on their own, making T.E.A.C.H. the only option. Also, the Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Rhode Island College and CCRI depend on this funding because it provides the necessary tuition for early childhood education students.
Community College of Rhode Island	\$1,292,500 for CCRI to obtain National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for its associate's degree program and for individuals currently working in the field to earn 12 free credit hours toward earning an associate's or bachelor's degree.	460 practitioners accessing the Community College of Rhode Island's Early Childhood Education and Training Program, with 137 having completed it to date, another 136 in progress toward completing 12 credits, and 187 in courses counting toward an associate's degree in early childhood.	Yes.	Federal CCDBG quality set-aside funding and state funding.	few early childhood educators would begin work toward an initial certificate in early childhood education. Much of the existing workforce has been out of school for several years and would hesitate to enroll in college courses for various reasons. The 12-credit option is viewed as less threatening and more achievable, and thus serves as a positive first step for many along a pathway toward an associate's degree.

Table 3. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
<p>Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Rhode Island College</p>	<p>\$1,403,487 to develop and evaluate a new set of infant and toddler development courses and to revise and update courses for RIC’s current PreK–2nd grade bachelor’s degree program, fund teaching staff, and provide student supports to remove barriers. Practitioners who work at least 30 hours per week and hold an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree in another field may apply.</p>	<p>two research-based bachelor’s programs, one with a birth-to-five concentration designed for teachers of infants and toddlers, and one approved teacher preparation program for PK–2 teachers. Both options use a state-of-the-art, on-line and classroom-based hybrid approach and provide significant student supports. Sixteen students were enrolled in the 2014–2015 cohort, and 24 students enrolled in the fall of 2015. Initial evaluation findings indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program; increased ability to demonstrate core level math, reading, and writing skills; and changes in teaching practices as a result of participation.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Federal CCDGB quality set-aside and state funding for institutes of higher education.</p>	<p>it would be more difficult to improve the expertise of the current workforce, but doing so is critical to improving child outcomes. Additionally, it will be difficult for programs to reach higher quality levels, since program quality is highly influenced by staff qualifications.</p>

Table 3. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Adult Education for the Early Learning Workforce	\$60,000 to fund a 6-month pilot of English as a Second Language (ESOL) and contextualized GED courses (i.e., integrating academic and occupational knowledge) for Spanish-speaking child care providers and providers who will soon be required to have a high school degree or equivalent as part of Rhode Island's new family child care licensing regulations.	funding a cohort of 22 child care providers in the ESOL course and 12 child care providers in the GED course.	Yes.	FY17 DHS budget request.	at least 77 current family child care providers could ultimately lose their licenses due to the lack of a high school diploma or equivalent. The new proposed regulations require that family child care providers obtain a high school diploma or GED within 4 years of enactment of the regulations, and these courses are an important means by which to meet the new regulations. They also serve as the first step on a pathway to higher education for non-native English-speaking providers. Finally, it is important for all early care professionals to be literate in their primary language in order to support the language and literacy development of young children in that language.
Professional Development (Assessment)	\$609,995 to fund training; the development of training modules, technical support to improve child assessment practices among early learning professionals, and to receive access to a Web-based formative assessment system at the state-funded rate.	the creation of professional development training modules.	No. Assessment training will become a responsibility of the Center for Early Learning Professionals.	N/A	N/A

Table 3. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
RI Early Learning and Development Standards Training	<p>\$2,284,742 to revise four training modules to reflect the new birth-to-5 early learning and development standards, to train and support a cohort of certified master trainers, and to train the state's early care and education providers on the new standards.</p>	<p>successful completion of at least one RIELDS training module on the new early learning standards by 1,308 center-based and family child care providers.³ Survey respondents ranked this training as one of the most important elements of the RTT-ELC grant.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Federal CCDBG quality set-aside funding and state funding.</p>	<p>there would be an inadequate supply of early learning and development standards training. This training supports providers in understanding the expectations for children and how those expectations are integrated into their teaching practices. This understanding is a key component of program quality, and reduced access to RIELDS training would impact a program's ability to achieve higher BrightStars ratings. Levels four and five of BrightStars require that 50 percent and 75 percent of teachers, respectively, have a RIELDS training certificate. The new CCDBG law also requires implementation of Early Learning and Development Guidelines, from birth to kindergarten entry.</p>

³Annual Progress Reports (2014=912), (2013=149). Figure from 2015 taken from the ELDS/Assessment Subcommittee Report, May 2015.

Sustainability and Funding Recommendations for Goal 2: Improving the Quality of Early Care and Education programs

The ultimate goal of Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant is to improve learning and developmental outcomes for all children, and particularly children with high needs. To meet this goal, the state proposed to improve the quality of early learning programs, focusing on programs that serve children with high needs. Early learning programs in Rhode Island operate in community-based organizations and public school settings, which have different regulations that set different expectations for program quality. The state also has a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) that articulates increasing levels of program quality. RTT–ELC grant funding was used to coordinate the different program standards into a continuum and to fund supports to help programs meet the standards.

As part of the RTT–ELC grant, the state created a system for defining and measuring program quality that (1) is based on research and current knowledge about the characteristics of early learning programs that are most important for supporting child outcomes; (2) provides a common definition of quality across different types of programs (e.g., child care, Head Start, state prekindergarten, family child care); (3) creates a continuum of quality levels with a clear point of entry for providers and a meaningful progression toward higher quality across a number of program indicators; and (4) established resources and supports to help programs achieve and maintain the new program quality standards.

The state revised and aligned the different sets of program quality standards, including child care licensing regulations, basic education program regulations, the BrightStars TQRIS, and the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Approval standards. Although different administrative agencies retain authority for different standards, the continuum created more coherence and provides a clear pathway to higher quality for programs serving young children. The continuum of program standards is connected with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks for professionals and the Early Learning and Development Standards for children. For example, the increasing levels of education (and other professional development experiences) outlined in the program standards encourage teachers to learn and develop the complex content and pedagogical knowledge associated with the competencies. Similarly, the program standards emphasize the importance of using curricula and assessments that are aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.

As outlined in Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant application, the state’s goal was to promote 100 percent participation in BrightStars across all sectors of the early care and education system. This goal represents a strong, unified commitment to raising the quality of early learning programs beyond basic licensing requirements and to chart a course toward continued quality improvement. The state developed and expanded resources to help programs achieve and maintain the indicators of quality set forth in the standards. Through the RTT–ELC grant, the state provided programs with the following supports:

- Quality Improvement Grants to help programs meet licensing regulations, BrightStars TQRIS program standards, and/or RIDE CECE Program Approval Standards;
- regular, ongoing Quality Awards to help child care programs serving 10 percent or more Child Care Assistance Program-funded children maintain higher quality standards in BrightStars;
- intensive technical assistance for programs seeking to improve quality;
- facilities grants that address urgent health and safety concerns, overcome significant impediments to moving up the quality continuum, or to reconfigure spaces where child care centers are facing a reduction in the number of children they will be able to serve based on clarification of Rhode Island child care licensing regulations; and
- support for staff to achieve standards related to higher education (such as the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, CCRI program, and other educational and professional development resources described in the previous section).

Four RTT-ELC projects were funded under this goal. All four projects require sustainability funding. These are

- BrightStars,
- Quality Improvement Grants,
- Quality Awards/Rising Stars, and
- Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund and Technical Assistance.

It is estimated that the total amount of sustainability funding required for these projects is **\$1,945,000**. Federal sources of funding (e.g., CCDBG funds) will contribute **\$550,000**, leaving **\$1,395,000** as the state share. Additional information is provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Sustainability and funding for improving the quality of early care and education programs

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
BrightStars	\$3,685,491 to develop a continuum of program standards, expand participation in BrightStars, and provide quality support through the development of quality-improvement plans.	(1) a revised set of higher child care licensing standards; (2) revised BrightStars center-based and family child care frameworks that increase the quality levels for the TQRIS in areas such as teacher qualifications; (3) 791 center-based, family child care, and public school preschool programs participating in BrightStars as of July 2015 (up from 209 programs participating prior to RTT-ELC); (4) a set of quality-improvement initiatives that include a quality rating, TA with a quality improvement specialist, a quality improvement plan, and connection to resources; and (5) quality monitoring.	Yes.	Federal CCDBG quality set-aside funding; DHS agency funding request.	the state will not be able to achieve full participation in the TQRIS. Accurate information about the quality of programs (including strengths and challenges) is essential for determining investments in quality improvement. Quality ratings also provide an accountability framework for continuous quality improvement across sectors (e.g., child care, Head Start, public schools, etc.). Additionally, programs improve in quality over time, and the state will be slow to conduct re-ratings and renewal ratings as programs move up the quality continuum. This is a key aspect of the system, and delays will affect the ability of some providers to earn increased subsidy payments when the state moves to a tiered reimbursement system for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Table 4. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Quality Improvement Grants	\$6,885,360 for grants to programs for the purpose of increasing BrightStars ratings, earning CECE approval, meeting the WKCFs, advancing teaching practices, creating richer learning environment, and assisting staff in achieving professional development goals.	grants to over 334 early childhood programs that produced a measurable improvement in program quality. A May 2015 review of the grants found that 67 percent of center-based and 74 percent of family child care providers receiving a quality award improved quality by at least one star level in one or more standard areas in BrightStars. ⁴	Yes.	Federal CCDBG quality set-aside funding; DHS agency funding request.	it will be difficult for programs to find the funding to move up the BrightStars continuum given inadequate revenue from other sources like parent fees. Additionally, the higher cost of quality should not be passed along to families, especially those who can least afford it. These grants have been a key driver of quality improvement in the state. Coupled with the technical assistance provided by the Center for Early Learning Professionals, they have also been an effective, highly supportive quality-improvement initiative and a strong incentive for programs to participate in quality improvement.

⁴Center for Early Learning Professionals. (December 2014). "Summary of Program Assessments Completed by TA Specialists/QIG Manager."

Table 4. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Quality Awards/Rising Stars	\$1,209,736, with average yearly expenditures of approximately \$421,878 ⁵ to provide additional funding to programs that achieve higher levels of quality on <i>Bright Stars</i> . Quality Awards, which were implemented in the first 3 years of the grant, provide per-child bonuses for every child in programs with a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating. Rising Stars, implemented in year 4, provides up to \$6,000 for child care centers and \$3,000 for family child care homes with at least a 1-star rating and that move up the quality continuum.	supported the cost of quality improvement for 73 providers across the state with additional funding for wage enhancements, bonuses, benefits for staff, classroom supplies, assessment and child outcomes resources, staff development activities, and continuing education.	Yes.	Federal CCDBG quality set-aside funding and the Rhode Island legislature. In states that reward high-quality early care and education with additional funding, the funding derives from the CCDGB quality set-aside or the legislature.	the ability of early care and education programs to provide high-quality care to high-needs children would be greatly diminished. Currently, over 60 percent of the quality award expenditures are being used to support and retain highly qualified staff, who are the fundamental driver of quality and enhanced child outcomes. Without this funding, programs would have a difficult time meeting the quality standards of the state's TQRIS, and the quality of care for the state's at risk children would decrease.
Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund and Technical Assistance	\$2,100,000 to fund facilities improvements and provide technical assistance to early learning centers.	provided funding for 81 programs (76 community-based early learning centers and 5 public schools). Fourteen programs were funded for capital improvements, 30 programs for facilities planning, and 37 centers for a combination of capital and planning. Funds benefited centers at all levels of the BrightStars continuum: 25% at the 1-star level, 18% at the 2-star level, 30% at the 3-star level, 21% at the 4-star level, and 6% at the 5-star level. More than two-thirds of grant recipients serve at least 40 percent of children in one or more high-need categories. Sixty-six centers have received DCYF licensing variances, and 18 were funded to address physical space issues specific to their variances.	Yes.	Rhode Island should explore bonding as a means for funding the capital enhancements that are needed to improve the state's early childhood infrastructure. Both Connecticut and Massachusetts have taken different approaches to developing capital bond funds to support early care and education facilities enhancements, and they can be used as a model for Rhode Island. Massachusetts, for example, allocated \$45 million in 2013 for facilities development and enhancement in the form of grants to child care facilities. The need in Rhode Island requires a significant infusion of funding that could be best acquired through bonding.	facilities improvement and technical assistance will suffer. Early care and education settings across the state will continue to decay; early care and education providers will suffer diminished capacity given the regulatory clarification and re-measurement of facilities; and parents will find it harder to find safe, healthy places to care for their children while they work.

⁵This number was derived by averaging the last three quarters of available data from DHS, which were the first three quarters of FY14. The quarterly expenditures were averaged and then multiplied by four to get the yearly estimate.

Sustainability and Funding Recommendations for Goal 3: Providing Important Supports to At-Risk Children and Families

Early childhood is a period of rapid and intensive development. Accordingly, a key aspect of supporting the development and learning of young children in Rhode Island has been to provide early learning professionals and parents with a clear understanding of the progression of child development and learning. In 2000, RIDE and DHS began the process of developing early learning standards that defined what preschool children should know, understand, and be able to do. The standards for preschool children were completed in 2003 and were accompanied by an immensely popular training series for both early learning professionals and parents. Given that early care and education is provided by a variety of programs across the state, the dissemination of a shared understanding of expectations for children became a critical aspect of the state’s system-building work.

The RTT-ELC grant provided the state with the opportunity to revise the preschool standards, create a set of infant and toddler standards, and create new professional development supports for parents and early learning professionals. In addition, the state used the new standards to inform or influence other aspects of the system, such as BrightStars, curriculum and assessment recommendations, and family engagement efforts.

In addition to the standards, the RTT-ELC grant allowed the state to pilot a screening and intervention model for children with developmental delays. Although all children may not reach developmental milestones articulated by the early learning and development standards at the same time, development that does not occur within an expected timeframe raises concerns about developmental disorders, health conditions, or other factors that may influence a child’s future developmental trajectory. Early screening at recommended intervals can help identify potential problems, guide further evaluation efforts, and pave the way for effective treatment or intervention that may prevent future problems.⁶ Indeed, the research charting the relationship among early identification through screening, the provision of intervention services, and positive child outcomes is striking.⁷ Effective developmental screening practices begin early in a child’s life; occur regularly throughout early childhood; use screening tools with strong psychometric properties; and are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for the child.⁸ The RTT-ELC grant funded *Screening to Succeed*, which helps significantly increase the number of children who receive standardized screenings, helps practitioners make more informed choices about interventions, and aids families in connecting with the services they need to help their children thrive.

Six RTT-ELC projects were funded under this goal. Two projects require sustainability funding. These are

- Screening to Succeed and
- Kindergarten Entry Profile.

Four projects do not require state sustainability funding. These are

- Rhode Island Child Development and Early Learning Standards,
- Comprehensive Assessment System,
- Fun Family Activities, and
- Early Intervention Support.

It is estimated that the total amount of sustainability funding required for the two projects is **\$736,800** annually. This represents state funding. Additional information is provided in Table 5 below.

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⁶American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Children with Disabilities (2001). Developmental surveillance and screening of infants and young children. *Pediatrics*, 108(1), 192-196.

⁷See, for example, Guralnick, M. J. (1997). *The effectiveness of early intervention*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing; Hebbeler, K., et al. (2007). *Early intervention for infants & toddlers with disabilities and their families: participants, services, and outcomes*. Final report of the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS). Also see Bailey, D.B., et al. (2005). Thirty-six-month outcomes for families of children who have disabilities and participated in early intervention. *Pediatrics*, 116(6): 1346-52.

⁸Moodie, S., Daneri, P., Goldhagen, S., Halle, T., Green, K., & LaMonte, L. (2014). *Early childhood developmental screening: A compendium of measures for children ages birth to five* (OPRE Report 2014-11). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Table 5. Sustainability and funding information for providing important supports to at-risk children and families

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards	\$157,572 to develop state-of-the-art, research-based, developmentally appropriate birth-to-5 early learning and development standards.	a set of early learning and development standards that are based on the latest research in child development and early learning, vetted by the nation's leading experts, translated into Spanish, and printed.	No. These are best-in-class early learning and development standards that will serve the state for at least 5 years, barring any groundbreaking research in brain science or early development and learning.	N/A	N/A

Table 5. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Screening-Continuous Quality Improvement	<p>\$1,477,129 to fund <i>Screening to Succeed</i>, the first statewide screening and response initiative for pediatricians who serve a large percentage of children with high needs. Funds were used to support physical, developmental, and social-emotional screening at 9,18, and 30 months and autism screening at 18 and 30 months. Funds were also used for technical assistance and access to the <i>Child Health & Development Interactive System</i> and patient tools and access to evidence-based resources ranging from child mental health consultants to parent education and support classes.</p>	<p>participation 22 pediatric practices in <i>Screening to Succeed</i>. Over 11,850 children have been screened. All practices have had access to a referral specialist, and implementation of evidence-based supports for children with a positive screen has started in ten practices.</p>	Yes.	<p>federal and state funding. Medicaid provides a billing code for screening under EPSDT. To fund the evidence-based interventions, the state should consider a social impact bond. Social impact bonds are being used to fund early childhood programming in a handful states across the country where private investors pay the upfront costs of social services and receive a return on the cost savings if outcomes are achieved. The dramatic return associated with early identification and intervention make it a prime candidate for social impact bond funding.</p>	<p>children who are in need of services due to developmental delays or other mental or behavioral health concerns would not be identified until later (if at all), causing them to miss out on critical intervention services. Referral capacity will not be sustained. The research charting the relationship between early identification of developmental delays, early intervention, and positive child outcomes is striking. Children who are identified and receive services early have better prognoses than those who are identified later. Early intervention leads to significant cost-savings in the long run.</p>
Fun Family Activities	<p>\$171,232 throughout the 5-year grant period.</p>	<p>a revised set of family fun activities based on the new early learning and development standards. The revision expanded the activities to include all children birth to 60 months (not just 3- and 4- year-olds). 333 parents were trained to understand and use the early learning and development standards to support their children's development.</p>	No.	N/A	N/A

Table 5. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Early Intervention Support	\$411,942 to support the training of Early Intervention (EI) providers on various early childhood topics, including the early learning and development standards, formative assessment, and other areas to improve their practices.	training of 385 Early Intervention providers.	No.	N/A	N/A
Comprehensive Assessment System	\$440,000 for the development of a comprehensive and aligned assessment system for children birth through 5 with developmental delays and disabilities. The funding is being used to put new policies and procedures in place for developmental screening/ child outreach, evaluation and eligibility, child outcomes measurement, and formative assessment. It is also being used to provide training on the new procedures to Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education providers.	the development of a single Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education system to seamlessly support children with developmental delays from birth to school entry.	No.	N/A	N/A

Table 5. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Kindergarten Entry Profile	\$348,500 to pilot and field test a voluntary Kindergarten Entry Profile Instrument.	Participation in a national Kindergarten Entry Assessment consortium, the piloting of the assessment, and the development of an implementation plan to take the assessment to scale in the state.	Yes.	FY17 RIDE budget request.	the state will not have a good understanding of how children are doing at the beginning of kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers will not have access to valuable information about the children entering their classroom.

Sustainability and Funding Recommendations for Goal 4: Improving Coordination, Administration, and the Availability of Data

Historically, federal funding for early care and education has come from different federal programs that derive from different federal agencies. In Rhode Island, responsibility for the administration of these early childhood programs has been spread across five state agencies: RIDE, DHS, HEALTH, DCYF, and EOHHS. A fragmented early childhood administrative structure is the unfortunate norm in most states. In these states, the result of the fragmentation is a two-tiered early childhood system that pits child care programs against educational programs, with poorer children having less access to high-quality early education. Under the RTT-ELC grant, Rhode Island took a significant step toward creating a cohesive early learning system guided by a common vision focused on improved early learning opportunities, child outcomes, and governance coordination of the five state agencies. With RIDE as the lead agency for this work, RTT-ELC funding allowed the agencies to employ staff members with early childhood education expertise and experience across the variety of settings in which young children are educated, including child care, public schools, and Head Start. These additional staff members, working together across agencies, supported program coordination.

Equally important, the successful administration of the RTT-ELC grant required effective project and personnel management. The state’s management team ensured strict compliance with federal grant requirements, supported the implementation of a statewide change management strategy, worked closely with stakeholders, and overcame barriers to implementation and resistance to change. The work of the management team brought the state’s vision for a coordinated system to life through the implementation of the grant. It was vital to the success of the grant, and it will be key to the state’s broader systems-change strategy moving forward. With five state agencies sharing governance responsibilities for programs and services for children ages birth to age 5, it is critical that the expert team continue to lead the ongoing early learning system implementation and that it use actionable data from the state’s data system.

Finally, the grant supported the development of the Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS) to improve the state’s ability to access and use data. ECEDS is a technology platform that pulls together data from multiple agencies and initiatives so that it can be used to improve the state’s early childhood system. RTT-ELC funding supported the development of new data system components, which include a system for registering child care centers. The system also includes an early learning program search with the ages of the children served, hours of operation, pricing, services provided, and quality rating. This information enables parents to more easily find programs that meet their preferences. For programs, the new system includes a renewal system for licensing and a way to request a TQRIS rating. A workforce registry is being developed that will contain information on Rhode Island’s early childhood workforce. Universal identifiers are assigned to programs, teachers, and children, enabling the linking of information across data sources and allowing ECEDS data to be transferred to the state’s K-12 data system. These features ensure that the system is useful for the early learning field as well as state policymakers, and it will help answer the following questions:

1. How many children are in various early learning and development programs? (data about unduplicated children by type of setting, location and quality)

2. How much high-quality early care and education programming are children receiving? (attendance)
3. How many different programs do children attend before entering kindergarten? (enrollment stability and overlap)
4. Which early care and education programs are high quality?
5. Does program quality improve over time? What are the barriers to program quality improvement?
6. How many early childhood professionals are qualified (by meeting specific establish standards) to prepare children to succeed at school entry? (core competencies, career lattice education levels)
7. What are the characteristics of the current workforce? (turnover, compensation, diversity, education, etc.)
8. How many children are on track to succeed during the early childhood years, at school entry, and beyond?

In order to continue to realize the vision of improved learning and developmental outcomes for all children regardless of setting, Rhode Island must continue building its early childhood education system. Without continued investment in the infrastructure and operating supports needed for a high-quality early learning system, program quality will not improve and children will have inequitable access to high-quality early learning programs. Accordingly, the state requires funding for the administration and oversight of the projects that will continue after the grant.

RTT-ELC funding under this goal was used for seven initiatives. Five aspects require sustainability funding:

- administration of the workforce initiatives,
- administration of the program improvement initiatives,
- administration of the supports to children and families,
- administration of the data system initiatives,
- contracted data support.

Two projects do not require sustainability funding. These are

- grants management and
- communications.

It is estimated that the total amount of sustainability funding required for this goal area is **\$1,448,494**. Federal sources of funding will contribute **\$242,440**, leaving **\$1,206,054** as the state share. Additional information is provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Sustainability and funding for improving coordination, administration, and the availability of data*

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Administration of Workforce Initiatives	\$579,532 throughout the 5-year grant period for an Early Learning Specialist at RIDE and a Programming Services Officer at DHS to support implementation of the RTT-ELC workforce initiatives.	the successful implementation of the state’s workforce initiatives, including development of the state’s Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks, the alignment of the competencies to the state’s professional development offerings, management of the RI Early Care and Education Training Program, management of the T.E.A.C.H. program, the creation and management of the Institute for Teaching and Learning and the Center for Early Learning Professionals, and the launch of the workforce registry to collect ongoing information about the state’s early childhood workforce.	Yes.	FY17 RIDE and DHS agency budgets.	the ongoing data analysis, policy decisions, and implementation of new initiatives needed to further improve the workforce to support children’s learning and development will not be possible. Additionally, it will be difficult to ensure the appropriate policy response to data that is obtained from the workforce registry and to ensure compliance with the training and professional development requirements of the new federal CCDBG law. ⁹ With funding, future work led by staff members would include ongoing policy guidance and contract management to the Center, the Institute, T.E.A.C.H., and CCRI; updates, as necessary, to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks; data analysis of workforce registry data; and development of new initiatives to meet the needs of the workforce.

*Expenditures made under this goal area but not included in the table include a TQRIS validation study, federal technical assistance, travel and supplies, and other administrative costs.

⁹Section 658E (c)(2)G(ii) of the CCDBG law states that the state plan “shall provide an assurance that such training and professional development— (l) shall be conducted on an ongoing basis, provide for a progression of professional development (which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education), reflect current research and best practices relating to the skills necessary for the child care workforce to meet the developmental needs of participating children, and improve the quality of, and stability within, the child care workforce.”

Table 6. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Administration of Program Quality Improvement Initiatives	<p>\$1,899,091 throughout the 5-year grant period for an Early Learning Specialist at RIDE, two Child Development Specialists at DCYF, and two Programming Services Officers at DHS to support implementation of program quality initiatives.</p>	<p>a revision of the state's child care licensing, BrightStars, and CECE Program Approval standards into a cohesive continuum of program standards; monitoring of programs by DCYF and RIDE; and management of Brightstars by DHS.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>CCDBG quality set-aside funding. RIDE, DCYF, and DHS FY17 budget requests.</p>	<p>the assessment and monitoring of early learning programs would not be conducted, and there would not be coordination among the multiple agencies involved in program monitoring. It is essential that all programs receive clear information about their program quality levels so that they can develop ongoing improvement plans. State-level coordination of the multiple sets of regulations and standards must be maintained if a cohesive continuum of quality expectations is going to be sustained.</p> <p>Particularly important is the fact that CCDBG requires that the licensing system maintain appropriate inspector-to-provider ratios. Rhode Island would risk being out of compliance should the state not maintain DCYF staff.</p>

Table 6. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Administration of Initiatives for Children and Families	\$1,893,533 for two Early Learning Specialists at RIDE (focusing on the Early Learning Standards and Assessment) and 2.5 FTEs at the Department of Health.	the implementation of new early learning and development standards and family training, <i>Screening to Succeed</i> , enhancements to developmental screening programs managed by LEAs for children ages 3–5, and the piloting of a KEA and comprehensive assessment system.	Yes.	RIDE FY17 budget request.	the ongoing policy decisions and development of new initiatives to support the understanding and use of the RIELDS by parents and early learning professionals will not be possible. Additionally, the systems of intervention for children in need require ongoing monitoring, support, and improvement. Ensuring that the expertise of the early learning workforce continues to improve is a key element of supporting children’s learning and development.
Grants Management	\$2,809,566 for FTEs at RIDE and DHS to support management, oversight, and implementation of the seven core RTT-ELC project areas.	(1) successful implementation of a bold vision based on best practices for an integrated early childhood system through the application and grant management; (2) cross-agency collaboration; (3) compliance to RTT-ELC grant requirements; (4) management of the Core Teams that resulted in the progress/completion of all of the activities discussed throughout this report; (5) development of the Exceed brand and communication blueprint; (6) creation of the Exceed Web site, including early learning program search functionality; and (7) ongoing communications, including frequent Web site updates, the publication of the Exceed newsletter, and postings on Facebook and Twitter.	Yes.	RIDE FY17 budget request.	no state agency staff members with early childhood education expertise will be leading the overall vision of Rhode Island’s early care and education system. Overarching management and communication to support the systems-building work will be affected adversely. Projects that that require cross-agency communication and decision making within an early childhood education frame will be difficult to maintain.

Table 6. (continued)

	The state spent	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Communication	\$500,216 to support the effective communication of progress, justify decisions, and obtain stakeholder input.	development of an annual communication plan; Web site consultation; a developmental screening campaign, facilitation and meeting space for stakeholder input; production of monthly reports; e-newsletters, graphic design of standards documents and annual reports.	No.	N/A	N/A
Administration of Data System Initiatives	\$3,112,110 over 5 years to fund staff at RIDE, DCYF, DHS who support development of the data system.	a fully integrated data system containing easily accessed information on the child, teacher, and program and that links to the K-12 system.	Yes.	FY17 agency budget requests.	end-user support for those who wish to use the newly integrated data system would be minimal. Response times from the help desk and assistance in generating custom reports would be prohibitively slow. Understanding how to use the system and the end-user experience is critical to the success of the data system in the long term. If the system cannot generate useful reports or is inaccessible to the end user even for a short period of time, user confidence will decay and traffic to the system will decrease and ultimately stop. This would mean that the nearly \$5.5 million RTT-ELC spent on a data system would have had no meaningful impact on the state's early learning system.

Table 6. (continued)

	The state spent...	The state achieved...	Is sustainability funding required?	Sources of sustainability funds include...	In the absence of sustainability funding...
Contracted Data System Initiatives	\$2,053,977 over five years to fund contracts to support the development of the data system.	a fully integrated data system that contains easily accessed information on the child, teacher, and program and that links to the K-12 system; and help desk support so that state agency staffs and the early care and education field can utilize the data system.	Yes.	FY17 agency budget requests.	End-user support will be compromised.

Conclusion

Building a comprehensive early childhood system takes time. Although a tremendous amount of work was accomplished under the RTT-ELC grant, the work will need to continue after the grant period in order to fully realize the state’s vision and outcomes. The \$50 million infusion of federal funds has allowed the state to put in place a strong foundation built on better agency coordination; data integration; and high-quality workforce, program, and early learning standards. These standards set high expectations for the workforce, programs, and school readiness, but it is the ongoing monetary, professional development, and technical assistance supports that help practitioners meet the standards. These supports are currently funded by the RTT-ELC grant. If sustainability funding is not allocated, Rhode Island will soon face a scenario in which the early care and education system will have of a foundation of high standards but no support for practitioners and other stakeholders to meet those standards. The state must continue to build on the strong foundation it has put in place to ensure that children in Rhode Island have the opportunity to meet their full potential.

APPENDIX A: RHODE ISLAND’S RTT–ELC DOCUMENTS

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Rhode Island Department of Human Services. 2013. “Quality Performance Report (QPR) for Rhode Island FFY 2014.” *Child Care and Development Fund.*

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS FOR THE RTT–ELC SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

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Executive Director, Brown/Fox Point Early Childhood Education Center
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Deborah Anthes

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Karen Beese

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Senior Program Officer
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Rhonda Farrell

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Tri-Town Community Action Agency

Lori Ann Heiner

Director

South Country Community Action Agency

Aimee Mitchell

Senior Vice President/ Head Start Director

Children's FRIEND

Lawrence Pucciarelli

Head Start Collaboration Director

Rhode Island Head Start Collaboration Office

Barbara Schermack

Director

East Bay Community Action Program

Mary Varr

Executive Director

Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association

APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your organization’s connection to the Rhode Island’s RTT–ELC grant, including any role your organization might have in implementing RTT–ELC projects (e.g., staff doing the work, supervision of vendors, advising, etc.).
2. In your opinion, what have been the most important benefits of the Rhode Island RTT–ELC grant to programs, teachers, parents, and children?
3. Do you have or know where to find data that can provide evidence of the benefits described above? For example, the number of children that are now in higher quality early childhood programs as a result of the grant?
4. How much do you estimate it will cost each year to sustain the ongoing work of the RTT–ELC projects that you know the most about?
5. Are there currently existing sources of funding that you believe could be used or repurposed for sustainability?
6. Do you have ideas for other sources of funding—federal, state, local, or philanthropic— that could be used to sustain this work?
7. Thinking about the RTT–ELC projects that you know best, what will happen to the work that has been accomplished in the absence of the RTT–ELC funding if no other funding becomes available?
8. Other than RTT–ELC project that you work on, what other projects are important to the success of your work?
9. Aside from what you just discussed, what other RTT–ELC projects do you think should receive the highest priority for sustainability funding? Why?
10. Are there other aspects of the RTT–ELC grant that you want to discuss that I didn’t ask about?

APPENDIX D: RHODE ISLAND STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

Exceed is collecting stakeholder input for a project that will inform a sustainability plan for the state’s early childhood projects funded with its federal Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant. The following questions seek your perspective on the RTT–ELC projects and the impact they have had on programs, teachers, children, and parents. Please answer the questions below based on your experience with the RTT–ELC grant. If you don’t know an answer, or don’t have an opinion on a specific question, please leave it blank. Your individual answers will only be viewed by the consultants administering the survey—all information that is gathered will be summarized and no information from any individual survey will be shared with the *Exceed* leadership team.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the few short questions in this survey.

1. What is your first and last name?

2. What is the name of the organization you work for?

(Select if applicable)

I do not work

3. What type of organization do you work for?

Please check the box next to each organization type that applies to your organization.

- Head Start program
- Prekindergarten program
- Child care program
- Advocacy organization
- Professional development or technical assistance provider
- Institution of higher education
- Foundation or funder
- State agency
- Home visitation program
- RTT–ELC vendor (specify):
- State legislature
- Health care organization
- Early childhood mental health program
- Family member of a young child working in a non-early childhood sector
- I do not work
- Other (specify):

4. What role do you play in Rhode Island's early childhood community?

Please check the box next to each role that may apply (may select from more than one sub-group, e.g., member of early childhood workforce and family member of preschool child).

Member of early childhood workforce

- Early childhood teacher
- Early childhood assistant teacher
- Early childhood special educator
- Family child care provider
- Family child care assistant
- Home visitor
- Other (specify):

Family member of a young child

- Family member of a young child
- Other (specify):

Program administrator, director, or owner

- Program administrator
- Program director
- Program owner
- Education coordinator
- Other (specify):

Community partner

- Professional development/TA provider
- Professor or other higher education staff
- Advocate
- Vendor
- Medical provider (pediatrician, physician's assistant, etc.)
- Other (specify):
- Early childhood mental health provider
- Foundation staff or funder

Policymaker or legislator

- Policymaker or legislator
- Other (specify):

5. Which Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge project has most positively impacted your work?

Please check all the projects that may apply.

- Early learning and development standards (ELDS) training
- Fun Family Activities cards
- Increasing alignment of program standards (licensing, BrightStars, Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Approval)
- Receiving a BrightStars rating
- Quality improvement grants to support a BrightStars quality improvement plan
- Quality awards for 3-, 4- and 5-star programs
- Developmental screening for children 0-3 and child outreach for children 3-5
- Developmental screening public awareness campaign
- Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD at state-funded rate
- Professional development (PD) from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Technical assistance (TA) from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Facilities improvement grants administered by LISC
- Technical assistance (TA) on facilities improvements from LISC
- Professional development (PD) on the appropriate use of assessment
- Early childhood training through the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)
- Early childhood coursework through Rhode Island College (RIC)
- Increasing interagency coordination
- T.E.A.C.H. scholarship
- Other (specify):
- Data systems

6. If you had to rate the following RTT-ELC projects for early childhood programs from most important to least important to sustain, how would you rate them?

Please stack the projects below in order of most important (top) to least important (bottom).

- BrightStars rating system
- Quality improvement grants
- Developmental screening for 0-3 and child outreach 3-5
- Facilities improvement grants
- Quality awards for 3-, 4-, and 5-star programs

- Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD at state-funded rate
- Increasing interagency coordination
- Developmental screening for children 0-3 and child outreach for children 3-5

Comments:

7. If you had to rate the following RTT-ELC projects for early childhood professionals from most important to least important to sustain, how would you rate them?

Please stack the projects below in order of most important (top) to least important (bottom).

- ELDS training
- PD from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- TA from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- TA on facilities improvements from LISC
- PD on the appropriate use of assessment
- Early childhood training through the CCRI
- Early childhood coursework through RIC
- T.E.A.C.H. scholarship

Comments:

8. If you had to rate the following RTT-ELC projects for families from most important to least important to sustain, how would you rate them?

Please stack the projects below in order of most important (top) to least important (bottom).

- Family Fun Activities cards
- Developmental screening public awareness campaign

Comments:

9. If you had to rate all of the following RTT-ELC projects from most important to least important to sustain, how would you rate them?

Please number the projects below in order of most important (top) to least important (bottom).

- BrightStars rating system
- Quality improvement grants
- Developmental screening for 0-3 and child outreach 3-5
- Facilities improvement grants
- Quality awards for 3-, 4-, and 5-star programs
- Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD at state-funded rate
- Increasing interagency coordination
- Developmental screening for children 0-3 and child outreach for children 3-5
- ELDS training
- PD from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- TA from the Center for Early Learning Professionals
- PD on the appropriate use of assessment
- Early childhood training through CCRI
- Early childhood coursework through RIC
- T.E.A.C.H.
- Family Fun Activities cards
- Developmental screening public awareness campaign
- Data systems

10. Please describe in your own words the impact that RTT-ELC has had on the quality of early childhood programs in Rhode Island.

- 11. Please describe in your own words the impact that RTT-ELC has had on the *quality of early childhood teachers* in Rhode Island.

- 12. Please describe in your own words the impact that RTT-ELC has had on *child outcomes* in Rhode Island.

- 13. Please describe the impact of the RTT-ELC funding for *children who are dual language learners*.

- 14. Please describe the impact of the RTT-ELC funding for *children who live in poverty*.

- 15. Please describe the impact of the RTT-ELC funding for *children with disabilities or who have special needs*.

- 16. From your perspective, what will happen in the absence of RTT-ELC funding if no sustainability funding is identified? *In your own words, describe the impact of not being able to continue the work that was funded under the grant.*

THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your input is very important to us.