The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant is a federal program which aims to improve the quality of early learning and development and close the achievement gap for children with high needs. RTT-ELC grants focus on improving early learning and development programs for young children by supporting each state’s efforts to; increase the number and percentage of high needs* children in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs; design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services; and ensure that any use of assessments conforms with the recommendations of the National Research Council’s reports on early childhood.

RTT-ELC in Colorado

Colorado was awarded $29.9 million dollars in grant funding through RTT-ELC in December, 2012. The grant will provide funding for four years which will accelerate the state’s plan to improve school readiness for all children. The implementation and execution of the grant is a collaborative effort between the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Higher Education and the Colorado Department of Education. Within the plan are six focus areas which will address different needs within the Early Childhood spectrum.

Six Project Areas of the Grant

**Grant Management** - Overall grant governance, stakeholder engagement, internal and external communications and funding for local early childhood councils

**Early Learning & Development Guidelines** - Distribute the Early Learning and Development Guidelines to all stakeholders, and assist in the adoption of these guidelines into practice by the early childhood workforce and into degree programs by institutions of higher education

**Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System** - Modernize Colorado’s approach to rating providers by implementing best practices and increasing participation. The new system will bring in all licensed providers and provide mechanisms and incentives to advance quality

**Early Childhood Education Workforce Development** - Enhance Colorado early childhood professionals through the development of a Learning Management and Professional Development Registry, disseminate core competency metrics, and provide incentives

**Results Matter Expansion** - Expand use of developmentally and age appropriate assessments to School Readiness and Quality Improvement Program (SRQIP) sites and Head Start sites not currently participating in Results Matter, and provide technical assistance and training to programs using assessments

**Kindergarten Readiness** – Launch a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), to determine the readiness of children to learn and thrive in a kindergarten classroom

*Per the Early Learning Challenge Grant: Children who: live in families with low-income; have a developmental disability or delay; are English language learners; reside on “Indian lands”; live in migrant families; are experiencing homelessness; live in foster care; or are recent immigrants.*

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**What this means for Colorado...**

- New resources for all Colorado children, their families and early childhood professionals.
- Increased access to early education services and supports for Colorado’s highest needs children.
- Incentives for Early Childhood Education providers to increase the quality of programs.
- Increased reading proficiency for Colorado kids.