

Early Learning Challenge—Minnesota Quick Facts

"We want to support breakthrough work that dramatically improves the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs serving High-Need Children. We will be looking to fund applications that demonstrate courage, commitment, capacity, and creativity." -U.S. Department of Education

"High quality early learning and education is critical for long-term academic success for our children. Today the Obama Administration made its commitment to early learning clear by designating \$500 million in funding for new Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grants, and Minnesota will apply. I have directed Commissioner Brenda Cassellius to prepare Minnesota's application."

-Governor Dayton

Basic Information

- Maximum possible award of \$50 million over 4 years for Minnesota.
- Grants must *supplement*, not supplant other federal, state and local funds.
- Minnesota Department of Education will apply in partnership with the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Health.
- Notice of the competition was published on August 23 and proposals are due October 19.
- Grants will be awarded by 12/31/11.

Grant Guidelines

The Federal Guidelines address the need for applying States to commit to "focus deeply on their early learning and development systems," present a "High Quality Plan" and assumes creation of an infrastructure that continues beyond the Grant.

Grant Priorities

1. Absolute Priority—Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
2. Competitive Preference Priority—Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
3. Competitive Preference Priority—Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry
4. Invitational Priority—Sustaining Program Effects in the Early Elementary Grades.
5. Invitational Priority—Encouraging Private-Sector Support.

Selection Criteria

- *Successful State Systems* that include: demonstrated commitment to early learning and development; rationale for reform; aligned and coordinated system; and sustainable budget.
- *High-Quality, Accountable Programs* with a statewide, validated QRIS and access to high quality programs for *children with high needs*.
- *Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children* through early learning and development standards, comprehensive assessment system, screening and addressing health, behavioral and developmental needs and family engagement.
- *A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce* that includes a clear ladder of knowledge and competencies and support for providers to move up that ladder.
- *Measuring Outcomes and Progress* including kindergarten entry assessment and building an early learning data system.

To share ideas and/or resources that may be useful in developing Minnesota's Early Learning Challenge Plan, please go to: <http://unitedfrontmn.org/education/> .