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New Kids on the Block:

Findings from the First Year of California's State
Preschool QRIS Block Grant

by Sarah Crow & Leila Rock

April 2016



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Executive Summary

In June 2014, Governor Brown signed into law a budget act and related trailer bills that made new investments in California's education system. Included in those provisions was the creation of an Early Learning Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant, an annual and ongoing Proposition 98 grant in the amount of \$50 million awarded to counties to build their QRIS through California State Preschool Programs (CSPP). Quality rating systems have been developing in California for more than a decade, and have grown substantially since 2011 with the injection of federal dollars through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). As RTT-ELC funds drew to a close in 2015, this Block Grant represents a significant contribution to maintaining a system of quality improvement in the state, and constitutes the Brown Administration's first financial commitment to expanding California's quality system.

The CSPP Block Grant is one of two major funding sources for QRIS in the state. The intent of the CSPP Block Grant is to allow counties to award local block grants to providers rated at the highest levels of quality to maintain their high rating, and help improve programs not yet rated as high quality.

Findings from the First Year of Block Grant Applications

- According to county applications, the use of grant dollars will lead to significant expansions in the number of programs engaged in QRIS: 1,272 new programs will be enrolled into QRIS, and an additional 1,031 programs are expected to reach the top tiers of quality over the next three years. If successfully implemented, over 59,000 more children will be served by programs with the highest quality ratings. In 23 counties, 100 percent of CSPP providers will be served by the QRIS.
- Counties proposed to spend **\$15.4 million** in direct grants to CSPP providers rated at a Tier 4 or Tier 5 to maintain or deepen the quality of their programs.
- Over half of the total \$50 million (**\$25.5 million**) was targeted to boosting the ratings of lower-performing providers not yet rated at Tier 4 and helping top tier programs maintain their high-quality rating. Counties planned to use these funds on staff training, stipends and incentives for professional development, and purchasing essential classroom supplies, among other activities.
- Counties planned to spend **\$7 million** of the \$50 million to improve awareness of and access to high-quality programs.

- Several large counties plan to use CSPP Block Grant funding to maintain or resurrect county-wide Centralized Eligibility Lists (CEL). CELs serve as a one-step process for families to sign up for all available local child care programs, and help counties quantify the number of children waiting for services. In 2011 state funding for CELs was eliminated due to budget cuts, making it more difficult for families to access information about subsidized care.

Implications and Policy Recommendations

Governor Brown's proposed 2016-17 budget included a plan to merge the CSPP Block Grant, CSPP program funding, and Transitional Kindergarten funding into a new \$1.6 billion Targeted Play and Learning Block Grant. The grant would be disbursed to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop programs that prioritize services for each community's lowest-income and most at-risk four- and five-year-old children.¹ These proposed changes to the CSPP Block Grant raise concerns about the impact on California's quality rating system. The Block Grant is the only part of the state budget that supports quality improvement for early learning, yet with no specified standards for quality outlined in the proposal, the future of the state's involvement in quality improvement and rating remains unclear.

The Governor and legislature should remove the CSPP Block Grant from budget negotiations. As articulated by many early childhood and K-12 education advocates, the changes outlined in the Governor's budget proposal are large and consequential, and merit a longer process for negotiations and vetting than is possible within the timeframe of the state budget cycle.²

The legislature should codify its commitment to supporting quality interactions in a wide range of early childhood programs for California's children. Clear and consistent information about the components of high-quality interactions would ultimately help improve program quality and children's outcomes even if programs are not enrolled in QRIS.

Introduction

In June 2014, Governor Brown signed into law a budget act and related trailer bills that made new investments in California's education system. Included in those provisions was the creation of an Early Learning Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant, an annual and ongoing Proposition 98 grant in the amount of \$50 million awarded to counties to build their QRIS through California State Preschool Programs (CSPP). Quality rating systems have been developing in California for more than a decade, and have grown substantially since 2011 with the injection of federal dollars through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). As RTT-ELC funds drew to a close in 2015, this Block Grant represents a significant contribution to maintaining QRIS in the state, and constitutes the Brown Administration's first financial commitment to expanding California's quality system.

This report describes one piece of the state's approach to building and maintaining a QRIS, namely first year of the CSPP Block Grant program. California's QRIS is distinct from other states' systems, including in its emphasis on local control.³ To understand how counties prioritize investments in high-quality early learning and how the effort is shaping local efforts, we examined county applications for funding from the first year of the CSPP Block Grant. We describe how counties proposed to allocate funding; highlight goals that counties aim to achieve with continued funding; and discuss the recent changes to the Block Grant outlined in the Governor's 2016-17 budget proposal. Our findings assume that counties spent funds in accordance with the plans outlined in their proposals. Finally, we offer recommendations for the future of this and other state investments.

CSPP Block Grant: Context and Goals

Building a system of high-quality early education is the first step in ensuring that all children enter kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed. To that end, 39 states have created a statewide system for improving quality among child care providers through ratings, incentives, coaching and other supports.⁴ In 2011, California was one of nine states awarded first-round federal funding through

RTT-ELC, and received \$75 million over four years. This funding led to the creation of California's QRIS, initially focused in 16 counties to improve quality and rate programs. California's RTT-ELC funding ended in December 2015. Through other funding streams and efforts by the California Department of Education and First 5, the system is now extending to most counties across the state. (See boxes below for more information.)

Race To The Top-Early Learning Challenge

California's Department of Education (CDE) led a process, in partnership with First 5 California and the First 5 Association, to create a rating matrix and system of quality improvement, which was implemented in 16 counties. By accepting the grant, counties agreed to a common definition of quality, though they remained free to add local standards and requirements. Roughly 77 percent of the grant was spent at the local level to support county quality improvement efforts and to enroll greater numbers of children in high-quality programs. Between 2011 and 2014, counties enrolled more than 800 CSPP programs in their quality rating systems, serving more than 38,000 children.⁵

Other QRIS Funding Sources

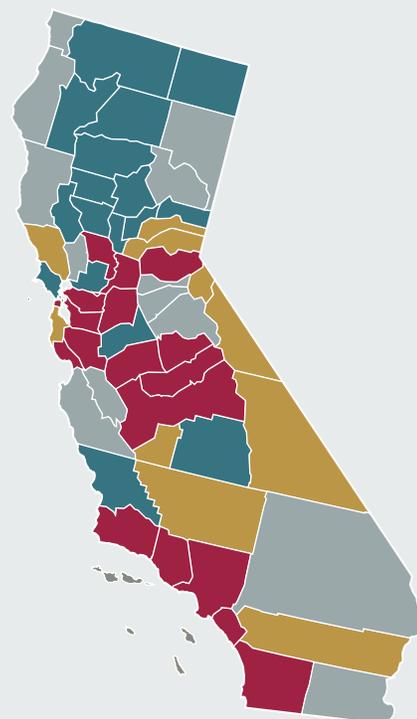
While the CSPP Block Grant is not the sole source of funding for QRIS in the state, it does represent a meaningful contribution towards maintaining and expanding the system. The only other multi-year funding stream is Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive (IMPACT), a \$190 million First 5 grant-matching program, which requires significant local investments, primarily from First 5 county commissions. The five-year grant, which begins this year, is a partnership with local entities, including local First 5 Commissions and County Offices of Education, and will provide support to providers across a range of child care settings, including license-exempt care.⁶ The state has also released a one-time \$24.2 million Infant and Toddler Block Grant intended to help support quality improvement for child care providers serving young children.⁷

The CSPP Block Grant is one of two major funding sources for QRIS in the state. (See box for information about other QRIS funding sources). Eligible counties received their Block Grant allocations in the spring of 2015 based on their proposals to improve the quality of their State Preschool Programs. The California State Preschool Program was originally modeled on the federal Head Start Program, and aims to provide equal opportunity for low-income children to access a pre-kindergarten (pre-K) educational experience.⁸ To be eligible for state subsidized preschool, families must have an income that is at or below 70 percent of the state’s median income, or \$46,896 for a family of four.⁹ CSPP currently provides approximately 157,000 subsidized slots for California’s 3, 4 and 5-year-olds.¹⁰

Although state preschool programs are held to a higher standard of quality than many other programs in the state, these standards still fall short of those associated with positive outcomes. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, California meets fewer than half of the minimum quality standards for state preschool programs, ranking lower than 36 other states.¹¹ While enrollment rates have been increasing since 2002, California still lags in terms of children’s access to programs. Only 18 percent of California’s eligible 4-year-olds are enrolled in state preschool and just 9 percent of the state’s 3-year-olds are.¹²

The intent of the CSPP Block Grant is to allow counties to award local block grants to providers rated at the highest levels of quality to maintain their high rating and help improve programs not yet rated as high quality. By allowing counties to use a portion of their funds to raise the quality of low-performing providers, the state anticipates that over time all CSPP sites will achieve a high-quality rating.¹³

Fig.1: CSPP Block Grant



Source: California Department of Education

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

The benefits of high-quality programs are well documented, and nationally, early learning advocates are moving towards consensus on how to define and measure quality. States' efforts to build and maintain Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) represent an important effort to untangle the definitive elements of high quality, and to set consistent standards for improving programs and measuring progress. California's system assesses programs according to seven different elements of quality that research has linked to improved child outcomes. Programs receive a quality rating at one of five levels, from Tier 1 (lowest) to Tier 5 (highest). Coaches and trainers work with providers to help them improve the quality of their programs and move into higher levels of the system.

The Block Grant prioritized counties that had pre-existing quality rating systems in place. The 16 counties that won RTT-ELC grants were categorized as Priority I and received awards from the first round of Block Grant funding. Counties with emerging systems, including some RTT-ELC mentee counties, were categorized as Priority II and were eligible to participate in a second round

of funding for the Block Grant. For the 2014-15 funding cycle, the bulk of the \$50 million grant (86 percent) was allocated to Priority I counties, while a smaller proportion (14 percent or \$7 million) was used to expand California's QRIS into Priority II counties.¹⁴ In 2015-16, funding extends further, adding 17 more counties to the quality improvement system (see figure 1).¹⁵

Findings: How Counties Aimed to Strengthen QRIS with Block Grant Funds

To be eligible for grants, counties had to show evidence of existing quality improvement efforts. This included evidence that consortia had adopted the common framework for quality, and appointed a local team to oversee implementation.¹⁶ In addition, counties had to “set ambitious yet achievable targets” for enrolling new programs and describe how funds would be used to increase the number of sites at the top levels of quality.¹⁷ According to

CDE’s Request for Applications (RFA), Block Grant funding levels were determined based on 2012-13 CSPP enrollment data of the approved counties.¹⁸ The RFA requested that counties divide their allocations across three broad categories: local grants to top tier providers, quality improvement activities, and projects that support assessments and improve families’ access to high-quality programs, which are described below.

Projected Participation Goals by 2017-18

The CSPP Block Grant represents a substantial opportunity to raise the quality of local programs, motivate greater numbers of providers to enroll in QRIS, and increase access to high-quality programs for vulnerable children. In their proposals, counties projected that Block Grant funding continued into 2017-18 would lead to the following outcomes:

- 1,272 new programs would be enrolled into QRIS, and an additional 1,031 programs would reach the top tiers of quality.
- 59,403 more children would be served by programs with the highest quality ratings.
- In 23 counties (18 consortia), 100 percent of CSPP providers would be engaged in quality rating, and in 26 counties (21 consortia), over 80 percent of CSPP providers would be engaged.¹⁹

Fig. 2: Sites Enrolled in QRIS

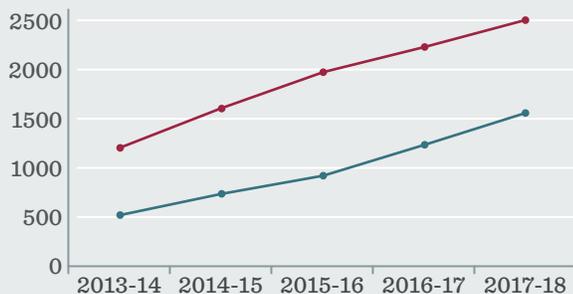


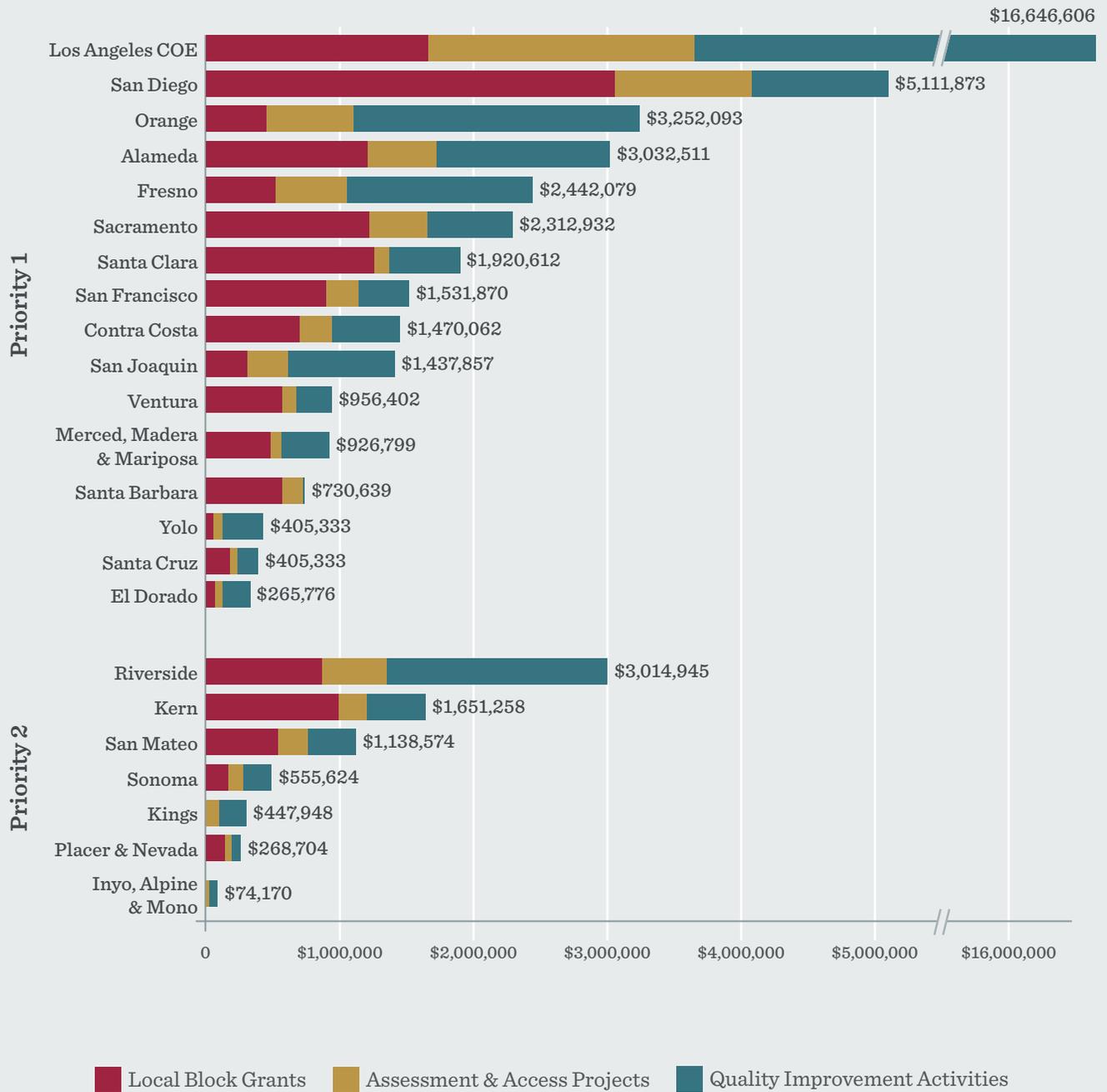
Fig. 3: Children Served in Highest Quality Programs



■ Enrolled, All Quality Tiers

■ Enrolled, Highest Quality Tiers

Fig. 4: County Spending Allocations



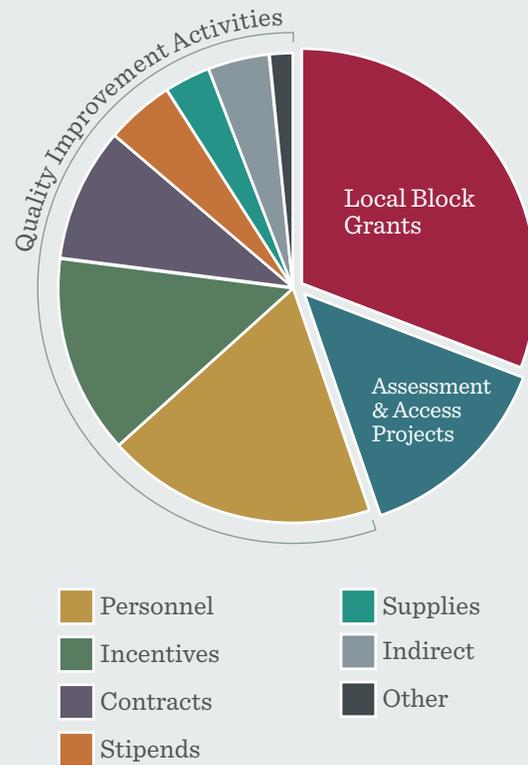
Variation between counties in how they prioritized funding emerges from these applications. Some counties used the majority of their Block Grants to strengthen providers already at the top tiers of QRIS, while others focused funding on raising the quality of lower-performing providers.

Providing Incentives to High-Performing Programs

One of the parts of any QRIS is a system of incentives, and all of the existing statewide systems offer financial incentives of some kind. These include higher subsidy rates for providers, quality improvement grants, direct bonuses to high-achieving providers, and more.²⁰ This component of the CSPP Block Grant represents the first state-defined system of incentives directed towards providers at the top tiers of quality. Emerging research suggests that a certain level of quality must be reached before children’s developmental outcomes improve. Growing evidence also indicates that once programs reach a certain level of quality, additional improvements may not be significantly related to improving children’s skills.²¹ Initial findings from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) suggests that in California, Tier 4 represents a significant threshold in the quality of adult-child interactions in terms of warmth and sensitivity, encouragement, and problem solving.²²

In their applications, counties proposed to spend **\$15.4 million**, or 31 percent, of the total Block Grant on CSPP providers rated at a Tier 4 or Tier 5 to maintain or deepen the quality of their programs. These direct grants can be used in various ways, such as supporting high-quality adult-child interactions, paying qualified educators, and keeping class sizes small.

Fig. 5: Three Areas of Block Grant Spending



Counties had considerable flexibility to decide the grant amount awarded to providers and how the funds were distributed. For example, counties could award these grants per classroom, per site, or per child. Some counties awarded equal grants to Tier 4 and Tier 5 programs, while others reserved a higher award for programs in Tier 5. Counties spent, on average, **37 percent** of their total award amounts on local grants to programs in the top tiers of QRIS.

Fig. 6: Distribution of Block Grants

| Example County | Grants to Tier 4 | Grants to Tier 5 | Unit | Percent of Total Award Spent on Local Block Grants |
|----------------|---|---|---------------|--|
| Alameda | \$680 (full day); \$408 (part day) | \$727 (full day); \$437 (part day) | Per slot | 38% |
| El Dorado | \$3,000 to \$4,000 depending on provider’s level of education | \$3,000 to \$4,000 depending on provider’s level of education | Per teacher | 16% |
| Kern | \$45,000 | \$50,000 | Per classroom | 58% |
| Orange | \$4,400 to \$6,400, depending on attendance at monthly professional learning community meetings | \$5,200 to \$7,200, depending on attendance at monthly professional learning community meetings | Per session | 14.5% |

Quality Improvement Activities

Counties proposed to spend over half of the total funding, or **\$25.5 million**, to boost the ratings of lower-performing providers not yet rated at Tier 4, and help top tier programs maintain their high-quality rating. Quality improvement encompasses a wide range of activities and services (see figure 7). On average, counties spent **44 percent** of their total award amounts on quality improvement activities.

The CSPP Block Grant allowed counties to use a wide range of strategies to improve quality. For example, in Alameda and Los Angeles counties, lower-performing providers had access to a “menu” of quality improvement activities to choose from, including case management, coaching, and support grants. San Francisco, Santa Cruz and El Dorado hired mentors and coordinators to provide targeted training for low-performing programs. In

San Mateo, providers were supported to complete “SMART goals,” which are short-term quality initiatives that are achievable in six months or less. In addition, the majority of funded counties used a portion of their CSPP Block Grants to supplement educators’ hourly wages during “release time” for staff to attend training and coaching sessions.

Methods to Strengthen Ratings and Improve Public Awareness

Up to 20 percent of the state funding was directed to the county consortia itself, to coaching and rating activities, and to help improve families’ awareness of and access to high-quality programs. Across county applications, **\$7 million**, or 14 percent of the total funding, was allocated to these projects. This funding allocation does not represent the full cost of rating programs at the local level.

Closing the Readiness Gap

Achievement gaps evident along racial, ethnic, and income-based lines emerge before children enter kindergarten, and significantly impact a child's life chances. Cognitive differences between low-income and high-income children, for example, emerge as early as 9-months, with distinct disparities noticeable at 24 months.²³ Just 48 percent of low-income children are ready for kindergarten at age 5, compared to 75 percent of their more affluent peers.²⁴ In California, just 13 percent of the state's low-income children are in high-quality childhood programs.²⁵

By centering efforts on preschool programs and by increasing the number of low-income children in high-quality state preschool, over time the state anticipates a significant reduction in the achievement gap.²⁶ Evidence suggests that high-quality early learning programs can help close the kindergarten readiness gap and level the playing field between low-income children and their wealthier counterparts. Beyond improving children's academic skills, high-quality childhood programs advance physical and mental health, reduce a child's involvement with the criminal justice system, and increase employment and earnings in adulthood—outcomes that help reduce inequality over time.²⁷

Several large counties used CSPP Block Grant funding to maintain or resurrect countywide Centralized Eligibility Lists (CELs). CELs serve as a one-step process for families to sign up for all available local child care programs, and help counties quantify the number of children waiting for services. In 2011 state funding for CELs was eliminated due to budget cuts, making it more difficult for families to access information about subsidized care.²⁸ Counties including San Francisco, Orange, San Joaquin, and the Placer and Nevada consortia used CSPP Block Grant funds to support their CELs and help increase families' access to high-quality programs. For example, Orange County enhanced its online system so that subsidized community preschool providers can request lists of families waiting for care and support their enrollment into subsidized programs.

Systems Improvements

By providing the resources to support QRIS work, the CSPP Block Grant helped counties make

investments in building infrastructure to scaffold a stronger statewide early learning system. Based on The Opportunity Institute's analysis, counties proposed to direct funds towards building infrastructure across the three categories of funding in the following ways:

Strengthening the Workforce

Well-trained, responsive and effective educators are the bedrock of high-quality learning experiences for children. Growing evidence indicates that particular practices, knowledge, and competencies may be more closely associated with positive outcomes for children than any particular credential, such as an Associate's or Bachelor's degree.²⁹ Teachers who have specific training in children's learning and development and access to ongoing professional support are more likely to provide the high-quality interactions that advance children's cognitive and emotional growth.

Fig. 7: Quality Improvement Activities

| Quality Improvement Activity (Based on budget proposals) | Number of Counties Participating (Total number of counties = 28) |
|--|--|
| Coaching, mentoring and technical assistance services | 21 |
| Incentives and grants for providers below Tier 4 | 18 |
| Purchasing classroom supplies | 14 |
| Trainings for educators on key tools to measure quality | 13 |
| Stipends and professional development opportunities | 13 |
| Enhancing data collection and reporting systems | 6 |
| Hiring early education consultants | 6 |

Fig. 8: Assessment Projects

| Project Type | Number of Counties Participating (Total number of counties = 28) |
|---|--|
| Contracts for site assessments and ratings | 20 |
| Hire personnel to coordinate assessment activities | 20 |
| Create and maintain databases, and contract data services | 14 |
| Purchase equipment for training and assessments | 13 |
| Train coaches to reliability on key tools | 9 |

Fig. 9: Access Projects

| Project Type | Number of Counties Participating (Total number of counties = 28) |
|--|--|
| Online communications outreach, including website enhancements, Public Service Announcements, and social media | 12 |
| Educational print materials, including flyers and brochures | 9 |
| Enhance online referrals to child care providers, including links to Resource and Referral databases and maintaining Centralized Eligibility Lists | 7 |
| Hire media consultant to develop consistent messages and branding | 3 |

For the first year of the Block Grant, counties allocated more than **\$2 million** specifically for stipends and professional development opportunities for educators and program directors. Funds helped cover the costs of training, reimbursements for tuition and books, and costs associated with continuing education. Several counties have strengthened partnerships with community colleges to offer higher education units. For example, Sacramento County partnered with 2- and 4-year institutions by offering a series of early childhood education courses for QRIS staff and administrators. Some counties used their CSPP grants to help educators pursue specialized training courses. For example, in Fresno teachers received stipends for taking community college courses on working with special needs children.

Part of building a strong workforce also involves compensation that reflects the importance and dignity of the work. One consequence of low wages is high staff turnover, which can negatively impact children's learning and development.³⁰ While some programs used funds for financial "bonuses" to their staff, many remain reluctant to use Block Grants as the basis for permanent salary increases without the guarantee of continued and predictable funding.

Supporting Lower-Performing Providers

Although the CSPP Block Grant categorically set aside funding to award grants to high-performing providers, many counties directed supports and incentives to move low-performing providers to higher tiers of the system. For example, Yolo, Merced, Sacramento, and Santa Clara offered grants to low-rated programs of between \$1,000 to more than \$13,000 per site. San Joaquin provided \$9,000 block grants to all providers regardless

of quality level, with an additional \$3,000 to help boost low-rated programs. Orange County offered \$4,000 sign-up bonuses for sites that agreed to enter the quality rating system, with a further \$2,000 bonus for sites that committed to sharing their learning and improving their programs. In addition, several counties supported lower-quality programs through intensive coaching, training and educational supplies.

Strengthening Pathways to Kindergarten

Using Block Grant funding, counties explored strategies for aligning standards from birth through third grade. For example, Sonoma and Contra Costa County planned to work with school districts to implement a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KEA).³¹ The aim of the KEA is to help CSPP providers identify where gaps exist in children's knowledge and tailor instruction towards their specific needs. Comparing KEA results of children in programs at different levels QRIS would also help counties assess whether quality ratings are meaningfully tied to children's outcomes.

Supporting Family Child Care Home Networks

Included in the Budget Bill language, family child care home (FCCH) networks that provide state preschool program services are eligible to receive CSPP Block Grant funding. Few counties were able to capitalize on this component of the program, but 6 of the 23 counties or regions provided significant grants for FCCHs. There was wide variation in how grants were dispersed, with some counties awarding grants per classroom while others award per child, per slot, or per facility. Grants for FCCH rated at Tier 4 or 5 ranged between \$408 and \$7,500.

The Future of Block Grant Funding

As counties plan ahead to enroll more programs into the system and improve ratings among those already included, they face uncertainty about the future of this funding source. Absent any changes to the Block Grant, funding for individual counties declines year after year as new counties join the system.

In January, Governor Brown released his proposals for the state's 2016-17 budget, which included a plan to merge the CSPP Block Grant, CSPP program funding, and Transitional Kindergarten funding into a new \$1.6 billion Targeted Play and Learning

Block Grant. The grant would be disbursed to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop programs that prioritize services for each community's lowest-income and most at-risk four- and five-year-old children.³² These changes to the CSPP Block Grant raise concerns about the impact on California's quality rating system. The Block Grant is the only part of the state budget that supports quality improvement for early learning, yet with no specified standards for quality outlined in the proposal, the future of the state's involvement in quality improvement and rating remains unclear.

Implications and Policy Recommendations

In the wake of the RTT-ELC funding stream, the state faces a decision about which agency should oversee California's quality rating system. Creating the annual CSPP Block Grant implied a commitment from CDE about their continued role in quality improvement. The Governor's recent budget proposal, however, raises the question anew. If the proposal is successful, CDE may be removed from the system it helped to create, and leave First 5 California as the only funder and statewide administrator of QRIS, with no additional funding to backfill the loss of the CSPP Block Grant.

The Governor and legislature should remove the CSPP Block Grant from budget negotiations. As articulated by many early childhood and K-12 education advocates, the changes outlined in the Governor's budget proposal are large and consequential, and merit a longer process for negotiations and vetting than is possible within the timeframe of the state budget cycle.³³

The system is still young and developing, but the CSPP Block Grant and the First 5 IMPACT program have given counties that did not participate in RTT-ELC the ability and incentives to work towards fully implementing the QRIS. Creating a cohesive, fair and high-quality early learning system for California's vulnerable children is a vast undertaking that requires concerted effort from stakeholders both at the state and county levels. By altering or removing the Block Grant, the Administration would kick away one of the legs that this effort stands on.

The legislature should codify its commitment to supporting quality interactions in a wide range of early childhood programs for California's children. Clear and consistent information about the components of high-quality interactions for children ages zero through five would ultimately help improve program quality and children's outcomes even if programs are not enrolled in QRIS.

Raising quality in childhood programs is the foundation of equal opportunity for all our children. County proposals analyzed in this report suggest that there is still work to be done to ensure quality standards are consistent, incentives equitable, and that families have access to high-quality programs for their children. Given a stable funding source and more years of maturity, California can begin to meaningfully evaluate components of the QRIS, and the investments made over the last several years. A reliable funding source would help counties further develop a unified system of early childhood education that includes a single system of standards, assessments, incentives, and professional development opportunities across all programs and funding streams.

Endnotes

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- 2 “Statement on the Governor’s Early Education Block Grant Proposal from Early Childhood and K-12 Organizations,” available at <http://edsources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/K-12ECEJoint-Statement-on-Gov-ECE-Proposal21.pdf> (last accessed March 2016).
- 3 California is one of two states implementing a local approach to QRIS. For more information refer to “QRIS National Learning Network,” available at <http://qrisnetwork.org/qris-state-contacts-map> (last accessed March 2015).
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- 5 Represents total number enrolled in CSPP programs in 2014, which represents year three of the four-year RTT-ELC grant, and is the most recent year for which data is available. Office of the Governor, State of California, “Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge 2014 Annual Performance Report” (2015).
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- 7 Early Education and Support Division, *Request for Applications for the Infant/Toddler (I/T) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant* (California Department of Education, 2014).
- 8 “Key Legislation Related to Preschool,” available at <http://ccrwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/preschool-legislative-history-2009-f.pdf> (last accessed March 2016).
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- 10 Estimates based on Legislative Analyst’s Office figures. For more information refer to, “Child Care and Preschool Subsidized Slots,” available at <http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2016/3326/14.pdf> (last accessed March 2016).
- 11 The National Institute for Early Education Research, “The State of Preschool 2014” (2014).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Early Education and Support Division, *Request for Applications for California State Preschool Program (CSPP) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant* (California Department of Education, 2014).
- 14 Proposals for CSPP Block Grant dollars were submitted to CDE between January and March of 2015, with funding extending through December 2015. For more information refer to, “Funding Results California State Preschool Program QRIS Block Grant RFA,” available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r2/cspqris1415p1result.asp> (last accessed March 2016).
- 15 For the 2015-16 funding cycle, 45 counties are participating in the CSPP Block Grant. For more information refer to, “Funding Results: FY 2015-16 California State Preschool Program QRIS Block Grant RFA,” available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r2/cspqris1516result.asp> (last accessed March 2016).
- 16 Consortia members include local First 5s, County Offices of Education, provider networks, Resource and Referral agencies, and others.
- 17 Early Education and Support Division, *Request for Applications for California State Preschool Program (CSPP) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant* (California Department of Education, 2014).
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Consortia include counties administering QRIS regionally. Regional Consortia include Merced, Madera and Mariposa; Placer and Nevada; and Inyo, Mono and Alpine.

- 20** “QRIS Financial Incentives,” available at https://qris-guide.acf.hhs.gov/files/QRIS_Financial_Incentives.pdf (last accessed March 2016).
- 21** Martha Zaslow and others, “Quality Dosage, Thresholds, and Features in Early Childhood Settings: A Review of the Literature” (Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, 2010)
- 22** Laura Hawkinson and others, “Independent Evaluation of California’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Quality Rating and Improvement System: Half-Term Report” (San Mateo: American Institutes for Research, 2015).
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