

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2015 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Connecticut





U.S. Department of Education PDG Grant Performance Report Cover Sheet

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Check only one box per Program Office instructions. Annual Performance Report Final Performance Report

General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419B150006 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 09

3. Project Title: Federal Preschool Development Grant-Expansion

4. Grantee Name: Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

5. Grantee Address: 165 Capitol Avenue

City: Hartford State: Connecticut Zip: 06106

6. Project Director Name: Myra Jones-Taylor

Title: Commissioner

Phone #: (860) 713-6411 Ext.: _____ Fax #: (860) 713-7037

Email Address: myra.jones-taylor@ct.gov

Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2015 To: 12/31/2015

8. Budget Expenditures (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

Budget Period	Federal Grant Funds	Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share)
a. Previous Budget Period		
b. Current Budget Period	\$11,689,109.00	\$5,384,589.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

9. Indirect Cost Information (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government? Yes No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:
- Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: _____ To: _____
- Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: _____
- Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only) Provisional Final Other Specify other: _____
- d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:
- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

10. Performance Measures Status

- a. Are complete data on performance measures for the current budget period included in the Project Status Chart? Yes No
- b. If no, when will the data be available and submitted to the Department? _____



U.S. Department of Education PDG Annual Performance Report Executive Summary

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: CT

PR/Award #: S419B150006

You are required to submit an Executive Summary of up to 3000 words with your Annual Performance Report. This summary should relate to your approved application and summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant, what you learned, and any evaluation results. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered. If there have been any changes to the project from the approved application, those should be explained as well.

Connecticut's ambitious and achievable plan, funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), was built on the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) existing state preschool infrastructure. PDG has allowed Connecticut to expand access to high-quality state preschool programs and improve the quality of existing State Preschool Programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 712 eligible preschoolers.

In Year 1, the OEC outlined the following activities to be accomplished:

- Hire two staff to deepen family engagement and manage data, accountability and reporting
- Complete MOUs with Subgrantees, issue grant awards and initiate payments
- Expand the hours of School Readiness Liaisons
- Assist Subgrantees in establishing MOUs for additional comprehensive services
- Initiate community collaboration and family engagement processes
- Conduct media and outreach campaigns to enroll eligible children
- Arrange CLASS training for Subgrantees
- Coordinate with the Department of Children and Families and the local McKinney-Vento coordinators to ensure eligible homeless children and children living in foster homes are given priority for PDG enrollment
- Assist Subgrantees to coordinate with local preschool special education coordinators to ensure that children with disabilities are included in all PDG classrooms
- Design and offer professional development and training opportunities to improve quality
- Provide services to Subgrantees through the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership

In May 2015, the OEC hired two full-time project managers to direct all activities of the grant. The Data and Accountability Project Manager works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates monitoring, payments, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. This position has worked in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Education (to which the Office of Early Childhood is attached for administrative purposes only) to issue all grant awards, initiate payments and track spending to support the implementation of PDG. Additionally, the Data and Accountability Project Manager has employed various forms of monitoring and oversight including a statewide monitoring plan, monthly enrollment reports, interim reports and regular meetings. A detailed Scope of Work has also been developed and reviewed for each Subgrantee and is updated quarterly to

reflect all activities, timelines and performance measures. This position also coordinates and executes contracts with state partners to deliver professional development, training and technical assistance as well as coordinates the third-party evaluation of the PDG. Through the monitoring mechanisms described above, this position has been effective in targeting technical assistance and training to Subgrantees and their early learning providers around issues including eligibility, enrollment, teacher qualifications and compensation, and professional development.

The Family Engagement Project Manager deepens local family engagement practices by working with Subgrantees to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. This position has created 13 Subgrantee Family Engagement Teams and has supported each in designing a community-coordinated, systematic outreach and recruitment plan as well as an evolving compendium of successful outreach and recruitment strategies. The OEC has also helped Subgrantees with outreach via press releases, newspaper articles and social media. Together, these resources have helped Subgrantees achieve 88% enrollment of eligible children as of December 1, 2015. As of January 29, 2016, enrollment increased to 99%.

Additionally, the Family Engagement Project Manager supports Family Engagement Teams to identify the appropriate early childhood stakeholders to assess current relationships and collaborations that provide for a birth-through-third-grade continuum. An assessment will be used to identify gaps in data, resources and information and will help communities create strategies to support a seamless continuum that ensures a smooth transition of children zero-to-eight *through* the continuum, as well as aligning values and practices *across* the continuum.

As outlined in Connecticut's application, building on our existing state preschool infrastructure uses existing School Readiness Councils to implement PDG at the local level. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness program. As of December 31, 2015, Connecticut was successfully partnering with 13 Councils to deliver high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state. Of those eligible children, 55% were being served in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces. MOUs are in place with each Subgrantee that outlines their roles and responsibilities in accomplishing the goals of the PDG.

Each Council also receives state quality enhancement funds to employ a full or part-time School Readiness Liaison that serves to coordinate the activities of the Council and is the single point of contact for the OEC. PDG has supported the enhancement of 12 Liaison positions by increasing the hours of part-time positions by an average of 17 hours per week. Additionally, funds have been used to provide training and technical assistance around the use of program improvement measures and monitoring of the PDG.

A unique goal of the OEC's application was to improve quality by offering transportation to eligible families. Ample research exists that confirms transportation is a barrier to both enrollment and attendance in preschool, in particular among low-income families. Subgrantees confirmed this locally and submitted plans and budgets to provide transportation to PDG eligible children. Costs for transportation varied across communities as urban districts had access to public transportation while more rural communities required the rental of vans and/or buses to reach families. In total, the OEC approved \$842,749 for transportation costs across seven Subgrantee communities, serving upwards of 564 eligible children.

As of December 1, 2015, 259 (46%) eligible children were receiving transportation services. The OEC will continue to work with Subgrantees and early learning providers to understand the effect of this

strategy on enrollment and attendance at the close of the fiscal year, as well as the true cost per child to provide this critical resource. Initial findings conclude that for most providers, transportation greatly improves their enrollment and attendance but may hinder opportunities to engage families. For one provider, it seems the need for this service was over-estimated as many families preferred to transport their own children. In this instance, resources have been reallocated to other early learning provider sites who have identified the need and ability to provide transportation for eligible children.

Another goal of the OEC's application to improve quality within PDG classrooms was the delivery of high-quality professional development. To that end, the OEC partnered with EASTCONN to develop a unique professional development and learning model that was designed specifically for PDG Subgrantees and is delivered and evaluated based on adult learning theories and current research and practice. The professional learning delivery model, supported by best practices and peer-reviewed literature on teacher effectiveness, tests the effects of highly individualized coaching and consultation as the primary medium to influence knowledge, understanding and practices within PDG classrooms. Each teacher has developed an individualized professional development plan aligned with four content areas: CT Early Learning and Development Standards, Social emotional development, Response to Intervention and Special Education Referral. Additionally, in response to an overwhelming appeal by teachers, the topics of supporting dual-language learners and screening and referral systems were added to the four content areas. As of December 31, 2015, each teacher has been assigned a coach and will work with them up to 21 hours to develop, refine and implement their individualized professional development plan. An independent evaluation of this model is also being conducted and results will be available in late spring 2016.

The OEC is also effecting program improvement by implementing the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) across PDG classrooms. In July and August of 2015, Teachstone conducted training for 27 individuals on the use of CLASS. Of those trained, 17 have achieved reliability and have been deployed to assess PDG classrooms using CLASS for the explicit purpose of program improvement. A PDG CLASS Rater Guidance document was created by the OEC and outlines how CLASS scores are to be used. Additionally, in October 2015, the OEC partnered with Head Start to facilitate training for directors of PDG program sites to learn how CLASS scores can be used to inform program improvement.

At the close of Year 1, only a handful of PDG classrooms had been scored as the OEC did not have enough CLASS raters who successfully passed the CLASS Rater test. To overcome this obstacle, the OEC partnered with EASTCONN to deliver another CLASS training in February 2016. Key messages and tips were reinforced before, during and after the training to help attendees get the most of their experience and to help ensure a greater pass rate. Recent data shows that all 12 attendees passed their reliability testing and many have already been deployed into PDG classrooms. As of February 20, 2016 nearly 70% of PDG classrooms have been assessed using the CLASS tool.

An additional opportunity to influence quality in PDG classrooms is to ensure the positive social and emotional learning environments and availability of prevention supports. A key strategy identified in Connecticut is the provision of early childhood mental health consultation provided by the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), a statewide, evidence-based, mental health consultation program designed to meet the social and emotional needs of children birth to five in early care and education settings. Every PDG classroom will receive ECCP's Core Classroom and Child-Specific services each year. The ECCP Core Classroom service is a three-month program that provides weekly social-emotional consultation services to PDG classrooms. Child-specific services are intended to provide focused consultation to a child when concerns about the child's social skills, emotional development or challenging behaviors have been identified. As of December 31, 2015, 499 children were served in core classroom services and 35 child-specific services have been provided. Additionally, 111 child-specific meetings involving families have occurred and 30 home visits have been conducted serving 59 family members. Initial results show that nearly 67% of PDG teachers

showed meaningful improvement based on CLASS scores in two or more dimensions and 100% of children within those classrooms improved ratings from pretests using the Child Teacher Report Form, a teacher rated scale that measures the effectiveness of services provided to individual children. Additionally, 80% of children showed improvement on ratings from pretests based on the Child Behavior Checklist, a parent rated scale that measures the effectiveness of services provided to individual children. The remainder of PDG children will be served through June 2016 and results of ECCP services and intervention will be available in July 2016.

In Year 1, outreach and recruitment of eligible children was a priority, although initially a challenge at the onset of the program year with two new Project Managers implementing a first-time grant with new partners and specific requirements. In October, enrollment forms revealed just five of 13 Subgrantees were 100% enrolled; this meant 21 of 37 providers with nearly six classrooms worth of children remained unfilled. Immediately, the OEC began working with Subgrantees on outreach and recruitment efforts as well as enacting almost weekly enrollment updates. The Project Manager for Family Engagement facilitated meetings with each Subgrantee in which outreach plans were developed and specific individuals were held accountable to enact the plans. In one community, executing the plan helped to enroll 9 children in just one week and in many others similar results were seen over a period of several weeks. By November, a 5% increase of eligible children was realized and an additional 6% by December. As of January 29, 2016, enrollment reached 99% --nearly all currently vacant spaces have been previously filled, but due to transiency and other issues, have been vacated. These spaces will be re-filled shortly.

While Connecticut has reached near 100% enrollment of PDG expansion and improved spaces, monthly enrollment reports have also shown a need to focus more on recruitment of children involved in the state's child welfare system as well as more strategic recruitment of eligible children with disabilities.

Although the OEC has not set a goal for the number of eligible children enrolled who are involved in the state's child welfare system, recent enrollment reports show that just 1% of eligible children fall within that category. To increase this number, the Project Manager for Data and Accountability has placed a data request to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families that will allow the OEC to not only identify the current number of eligible children committed to care, but also the current number of four-year olds who are in some way involved in the child welfare system. Many of those involved with the system are low-income families and may be eligible for the PDG. These children and families are among the most vulnerable and could stand to benefit the most from the high-quality components offered through Connecticut's grant including comprehensive services, deepened family engagement and transportation. Additionally, the data request will include children both committed to, and involved with, the state's child welfare system who *will* turn four-years old by December 31, 2016 so that the OEC and Subgrantees may better understand future trends of eligible children and work with local DCF offices to increase enrollment of this priority population.

The OEC has established a goal to fill 8.2% of PDG spaces with eligible four year-olds with disabilities, the state's current percentage of four-year old children receiving services through part B, section 619 of IDEA. As of December 1, 2015 the OEC was exceeding this goal by serving 11% of eligible children with disabilities in PDG classrooms. The OEC is working closely with Subgrantees to continue to meet this goal as well as strengthen the coordination between local preschool special education coordinators and Subgrantees to deliver services to those children within PDG classroom settings. To do this, the Family Engagement Project Manager is first helping Subgrantees create MOUs which outline the roles and responsibilities of early learning providers and special education coordinators in identifying, recruiting and enrolling eligible children with special needs. The MOUs will also outline the delivery of services within the PDG classroom setting as well as the process and timeline by which referrals will take place. As of December 31, 2015, two MOUs had been completed and 11 are in progress and set to be completed by spring of 2016.

On January 13, 2016 the OEC invited all Subgrantees and their school district special education coordinators to meet and discuss the challenges of enrolling and serving children with disabilities in PDG classrooms. The Project Manager for Family Engagement and other OEC staff facilitated the meeting that included 30 participants. Also in attendance was the Connecticut State Department of Education's 619 Coordinator.

Key among the challenges discussed at the meeting was the time needed for meaningful planning on this issue. Initially, assumptions had been made that a prior practice of "sharing" children with IEPs between part-day, special education classrooms and PDG classrooms would be allowed however, this practice does not meet the grant's definition of full-day and was not allowed. Looking ahead to Year 2, a priority will be a renewed focus on collaboration with school districts to deliver special education and related services that are integrated into the routines and activities of PDG classrooms. In most cases, community school districts are receptive to this focus and planning in the spring allows for lead time that was not feasible in Year 1. MOUs that outline the allocation of resources to serve children with disabilities in all PDG classrooms, regardless of setting, will be finalized before the start of the next program year and the OEC will also begin tracking the number of children who have been referred for further evaluation. Together, these strategies should help the OEC and its Subgrantees most effectively serve children with disabilities in all PDG settings.

An area of concern within Subgrantee communities continues to be overlapping eligibility requirements among state and federally funded programs such as PDG, School Readiness and Head Start. At the state level, it is our goal to support community-coordinated systems for placing children in programs that best meet the needs of children and their families.

PDG's focus on outreach and recruitment will continue to be enrolling children who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to participate in a quality preschool program. However, we have encountered several situations in which families have become interested in PDG while also being eligible for, or even enrolled in, other programs. In considering multiple quality programs, the decision often comes down to parent choice regarding one or more program components. In several specific cases in Connecticut, parents have become interested in the quality components (full-day) or comprehensive services (transportation) offered by PDG, components that were extremely important in meeting their family's needs and not available in other programs.

Ultimately, the OEC believes concerns can be addressed through community collaboration to ensure every child has the opportunity to participate in quality preschool experiences. To that end, the OEC will continue working with Subgrantees and their early learning providers to create community collaborations that serve every child in PDG, as well as other state and federally-funded programs. Every child and family should be offered a wide breadth of preschool settings that best meet their needs, with the assurance that their decisions will be respected and services will be delivered in a high-quality way regardless of setting.

Several challenges still remain including the recruitment of more children involved in the child welfare system, coordinating and delivering special education and related services within community-based settings for children with disabilities and helping Subgrantees to create and implement community-coordinated, systematic outreach and recruitment plans which will benefit all state and federally-funded programs. Planning to address these items is occurring well in advance of the Year 2 program start date (July 2016) --the OEC believes this planning is critical to overcoming to challenges noted above and was largely absent in Year 1 due to time constraints and staff being hired later in the year than expected (May vs February). The OEC is confident that the PDG is allowing more children access to high-quality preschool throughout the state.



U.S. Department of Education
PDG Annual Performance Report
Grant Status Form
Explanation of Progress (524B Section A)

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: CT

PR/Award #: S419B150006

Section A: Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (narrative)

1. Project Objective

1(a) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant. Describe the State's progress in meeting this Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure based on enrollment of Eligible Children in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant as of December 1, 2015.

As of December 1, 2015, Connecticut's PDG was supporting the delivery of high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state (88% of our target of 712 eligible children). Of those eligible children served, 55% were in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces.

There are several factors that have contributed to the overall increase in enrollment of eligible children served in PDG programs, they include:

- Increasing School Readiness Liaison hours
- Hiring two project managers
- Implementing regular monitoring including monthly enrollment reports as well as interim reports
- Helping Subgrantees to design community-coordinated systematic plans specifically for outreach and recruitment of PDG and other state and federally funded programs

Each School Readiness Council employs a full or part-time School Readiness Liaison, using state quality enhancement funds, to act as a single point of contact for the OEC and to coordinate much of the activities of the Council. PDG funds have been used to expand the hours of 12 PDG Liaison positions by an average of 17 hours per week. Expanding the hours of these positions has been critical to increasing enrollment as Liaisons have been key to working with early learning providers on their outreach and recruitment strategies of eligible children as well as monitoring and providing data to the OEC about enrollment and outreach activities.

In May 2015, the OEC hired two full-time project managers to direct all activities of the grant. The Data and Accountability Project Manager works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates all aspects of the PDG including monitoring, payments, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. This position has been critical to increasing enrollment by developing, implementing and reviewing monthly enrollment reports which monitor enrollment of eligible children at the Subgrantee and provider level. These reports are then used to target and deploy resources based on that data, to help further increase enrollment.

One such resource is the Family Engagement Project Manager, whose primary work includes deepening local family engagement practices by working with Subgrantees to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. This position has contributed to increasing enrollment by assisting Subgrantees in creating Family Engagement Teams that are responsible for designing an outreach and recruitment plan. This plan will:

- Support a community-coordinated, systematic, outreach plan with accountability that will enhance Connecticut's capacity to identify, recruit, and serve PDG-eligible children, giving priority to children who are homeless, involved with the child welfare system, and English language learners
- Support enrollment of children with IEPs that reflects their representation in the local community
- Document and monitor the efforts described above
- Provide the opportunity to disseminate promising and proven outreach and recruitment strategies among Connecticut's 13 PDG communities

To support Subgrantees in creating these plans, the Family Engagement coordinator has met with each community to learn about existing outreach and recruitment strategies and their need for support to achieve full enrollment. Additionally, communities have completed a survey regarding existing outreach, recruitment and family engagement strategies as well as the status of the birth-to-third grade continuum to inform PDG's family engagement work. It is the belief of the OEC that family engagement is critical to influencing enrollment and that parents are among the best resources to help PDG programs recruit other eligible families. Parents are the best spokespersons for programs. In fact, a local parent educator in one Subgrantee community single-handedly recruited 30 eligible children during a two week period during summer 2015 by talking with parents in parks, churches, business establishments and during recreational and sports activities throughout the community.

Based on information submitted by early learning providers in PDG Interim Reports, various strategies were implemented which helped to increase enrollment of eligible children in PDG funded programs. Across PDG provider sites, the most widely used methods of recruitment to increase enrollment included (from most widely used to least used): flyers (19), board of education referrals (11), local child welfare offices (11), shelters (11), community events (9), the use of outreach workers or parent educators (9), community institutions such as nail salons or grocery stores (9), existing wait lists (8), social media (7), newspapers (7), doctors' offices (6), food and clothing banks (6), churches (5) and WIC and DSS offices (5). Other methods included visiting parks, unemployment centers, libraries and door-to-door outreach as well as the use of Child Care 2-1-1, Connecticut's child care resource and referral line. In some instances, early learning providers also have formalized MOUs in place with shelters and adult education programs to ensure the referral of eligible children for state and federally funded preschool spaces.

Each of the factors listed above have contributed to increasing enrollment of eligible children in PDG programs and together have achieved a current 99% enrollment of eligible children (up from 88% as of December 1, 2015). The OEC is confident that, with more time to prepare for Year 2, full enrollment will be achieved earlier, and sustained throughout the year as Subgrantees continue to refine their outreach and recruitment strategies.

Enrollment of priority populations such as those children who are homeless, English language learners, involved in the child welfare system and children with disabilities has also increased. As of December 1, 2015, 3% of eligible children were homeless, 16% were English language learners, 1% were involved in the child welfare system and 11% had an IEP.

As mentioned earlier, the OEC has not established targets for enrollment of these priority

populations, with the exception of serving children with disabilities as required in Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants. That said, the OEC will continue explore strategies and opportunities to increase the number of eligible children served within these priority populations with a focus on increasing the number of eligible who are involved in the child welfare system. Enrollment for some of these populations has increased since December 1, 2015 and as of January 29, 2016, the percentage of eligible children who are homeless increased by 1% and English language learners increased by 4%.

The OEC will prioritize increasing enrollment of eligible children involved in the child welfare system as we know the need is great. In Year 1, the OEC established that Subgrantees and early learning providers would recruit children who were in foster care, however, this definition limited enrollment and/or the collection of data only to those children who were fully committed to the state Department of Children and Families (DCF). As previously mentioned, to increase enrollment of this population, the Project Manager for Data and Accountability has placed a data request to DCF that will allow the OEC to not only identify the current number of eligible children in foster care within each Subgrantee community, but also the current number of four-year olds who are in some way involved in the child welfare system. The data requested will also include children both committed to, and involved with, the state's child welfare system who *will* turn four-years old by December 31, 2016 so that the OEC and Subgrantees may better understand future trends of eligible children and work with local DCF offices more closely to increase enrollment of this population.

As the OEC has met its target for serving children with disabilities it is not looking to increase enrollment for this population but rather, will work with Subgrantees, early learning providers and local special education coordinators to sustain current enrollment and better deliver services within PDG classroom settings.

As previously mentioned, one of the biggest challenge faced by the OEC in supporting children with disabilities has been working to ensure all services are delivered within the PDG classroom setting, as well as the length of time between a referral for further evaluation and establishing an IEP. The OEC is focusing on planning and collaboration as a means to overcome these challenges and is committed to supporting Subgrantees, early learning providers and local districts as they create and finalize MOUs that outline how best to recruit, enroll and serve children with disabilities in PDG classrooms.

Please describe, as required in Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA), how the State established policies and procedures that ensure that the percentage of Eligible Children with disabilities served by the High-Quality Preschool Programs is not less than either the percentage of four-year-old children served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), or the current national average, whichever is greater.

Note: The current national percentage of four year-old-children receiving services through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 6.4%. Source: 2012 IDEA Part B Child Count (www.ideadata.org). States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

As per Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA), the OEC was to establish policies and procedures that ensure the percentage of eligible children with disabilities served by the high-quality preschool programs is not less than either the percentage of four-year old children served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA, or the current national average, whichever is greater.

Currently, Connecticut's percentage of four-year olds served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 8.2%, higher than the national average and the target for enrollment in the state. The OEC has exceeded this target with the enrollment of 11% of children with disabilities as of December 1, 2015.

While the OEC has met its target of serving eligible children with disabilities across all 13 participating communities, further analysis of the data indicates that at the program level, some high-quality programs have enrolled a much higher percentage of children with disabilities (up to 25%), while others had no children with disabilities enrolled. As of December 1, 2015, three Subgrantees representing five early learning providers and six classrooms had not enrolled any children with disabilities. After several conversations with these early learning providers, it was determined that while they had no children with IEPs currently enrolled, they had, in fact, referred several children to the local school district for further evaluation. While it is likely that one or more IEPs will result, as of January 29, 2016, the school district evaluation process was ongoing and IEPs had not yet been established for any of the children referred.

While the OEC strongly supports efforts to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in high-quality PDG classrooms, there is concern when the number of children with disabilities significantly exceeds their representation in the general population, especially in PDG classrooms with low income eligibility requirements and where priority is given to enrollment of children who are homeless, in foster care and English language learners --all potential risk factors of developmental delay. The OEC recognizes that in order to meet the needs of all enrolled children, classrooms need to have some balance of children with significant needs and children who are functioning typically. To that end, the OEC will work with Subgrantees and early learning providers to enroll at least one child with an IEP but no more than two children in a single classroom - numbers that represent the presence of 4-year old children with disabilities in the general school population. That being said, given PDG's priority populations, it is likely that enrollment of children with disabilities exceeding 8.2% remains likely. We will continue to consider strategies to address this issue.

As previously mentioned, one of the biggest challenges faced by the OEC in supporting children with disabilities has been to collaborate with local school districts to ensure that special education and related services are delivered within the PDG classroom in a timely manner.

To help address this issue, on January 13, 2016 the OEC invited all Subgrantees and their school district special education coordinators to meet and discuss challenges of enrolling and serving children with disabilities in PDG classrooms. The Project Manager for Family and Community Engagement and other OEC staff facilitated the meeting that included 30 participants. Also in attendance was the Connecticut State Department of Education's 619 Coordinator. Together, attendees discussed how they could collaborate to serve four-year olds with disabilities enrolled in PDG classrooms and focused the discussion around three key conversations:

1. What successes can Subgrantees share related to the delivery of special education and related services to children with IEPs who are enrolled in PDG classrooms in Year 1 of the grant? What contributed to your success?
2. What are the challenges in delivery of special education and related services to children with IEPs enrolled in PDG classrooms? With lead time before the start of Year 2, can some of those challenges be successfully addressed and if so, how?
3. How can PDG support the collaboration necessary to ensure children with IEPs who are enrolled in PDG classrooms get the special education and related services they need within the PDG setting?

Key among the challenges was the time needed for meaningful planning on this issue. Year 1 implementation of the PDG was fast-paced and unfortunately did not provide enough lead time for Subgrantees and local special education coordinators to strategically plan for the effective delivery of services in community-based settings. Conversations took place too late in the school year, after

resources had already been deployed to serve children with IEPs, generally in part-day classrooms in a centralized location within the school district. Assumptions had already been made that a prior practice of “sharing” children with IEPs, i.e., part-day enrollment in the centralized district location in a special education classroom and part-day enrollment in a community-based setting would continue - a practice that did not meet the full-day requirement of PDG classrooms.

Looking ahead to Year 2, a priority of the OEC will be collaboration with community school districts to deliver special education and related services integrated into the normal routines and activities of PDG classrooms. In most cases, community school districts are receptive to this priority. In addition, planning in the spring allows for the lead time that was not provided in Year 1. Additionally, the OEC and attendees involved in the meeting have committed to finalizing MOUs which would clearly articulate how best to allocate resources and serve children with disabilities in all PDG classrooms, regardless of setting. Recognizing that establishing an IEP takes time, the OEC will begin to track not only the number of children with IEPs, but also the number of children who have been referred for further evaluation.

The OEC will continue to collaborate with colleagues at the State Department of Education, Subgrantees, early learning providers, early childhood special education coordinators, and other school district and community partners to identify, recruit, enroll and serve children with disabilities in all PDG settings.

Describe the State's progress in increasing the number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant.

As of December 1, 2015, Connecticut's PDG was supporting the delivery of high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state (88% of our target of 712 eligible children). Of those eligible children served, 55% were in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces.

As mentioned previously, the OEC uses existing School Readiness Councils to implement PDG at the local level. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness program. It was imperative that PDG efforts coordinate with this existing state preschool program to affect the overall number and percent of eligible children served. As of December 31, 2015, Connecticut was successfully partnering with 13 Councils to deliver high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state. Of those eligible children, 55% were being served in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces.

Connecticut's PDG has supported the enhancement of 12 School Readiness Liaison positions by increasing the hours of part-time positions by an average of 17 hours per week. The enhancement of these positions has contributed to the overall number and percent of eligible children being funded by the PDG as they help to coordinate local outreach and recruitment efforts with support from the OEC. Additionally, this position locally monitors enrollment data and reports figures to the OEC on an ongoing basis.

Based on information submitted by early learning providers in PDG Interim Reports, various strategies were implemented that helped to increase enrollment of eligible children in PDG funded programs. Across PDG provider sites, the most widely used methods of recruitment to increase enrollment included (from most widely used to least used): flyers (19), Board of Education referrals (11), local child welfare offices (11), shelters (11) community events (9), the use of outreach workers or parent educators (9), community institutions such as nail salons or grocery stores (9), existing wait lists (8), social media (7), newspapers (7), doctors' offices (6), food and clothing banks (6), churches (5) and WIC and DSS offices (5). Other methods included visiting parks, unemployment centers, or libraries and door-to-door outreach as well as the use of 2-1-1 Child Care, Connecticut's child care resource and referral service. In some instances, early learning providers also have formalized MOUs in place with shelters and adult education programs to ensure the referral of eligible children for state and federally funded preschool spaces. A key strategy moving forward will be to support Subgrantees in translating all outreach and recruitment materials into Spanish and other languages widely used in their communities. Several Subgrantees currently have the capacity to translate materials and the OEC will work to coordinate this service to ensure the availability of resources, and encourage resource sharing, so that all families are aware of, and have access to this high-quality program.

Connecticut has made considerable state investment in its high-quality state preschool programs for three and four-year olds, now budgeted at \$110 million in State Fiscal Year 2016. The state has increased the number of state preschool program spaces five times since State Fiscal Year 2007. In the most recent expansion for FY 2015, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved, expanding state preschool programs by 1,020 spaces. That brings the current total of spaces to 14,852 (including those spaces that are used as wrap-around or extended day). Due to statewide budget deficits, it is unclear how spaces may be expanded moving forward. However, the governor's office is committed to supporting quality early childhood and has limited rescissions wherever possible in order to maintain the state's existing high-quality preschool programs. The state will continue to expand

preschool classrooms in public schools through federal Tobacco Settlement Funds up to a limit of \$10M per year. According to the 2013 NIEER "State Preschool Yearbook", Connecticut ranked third behind only the District of Columbia and New Jersey in spending per child for state preschool programs.

Together, the above strategies, along with others detailed throughout this report, have helped Connecticut to increase the overall number and percentage of eligible children served in high-quality preschool programs funded by the grant.

1(b) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children served overall in the State Preschool Program. Please describe any increases or decreases in this GPRA measure based on fall enrollment in the State Preschool Program for the 2015-16 school year.

Connecticut has made a strong commitment to young children in the state for many years. The clearest testament to this commitment came with the creation of the OEC in 2013 by Executive Order, and put into statute in the 2014 legislative session with passage of Public Act 14-39. This cabinet-level agency has complete statutory and budgetary authority over state early childhood programs and services, including state preschool programs, child care subsidies from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), licensing and the majority of home visiting services. In its third year of operation, the Office of Early Childhood has made changes to its CCDBG plan to better align our policies to the needs of our most vulnerable children and families. It has also shifted policies to provide greater opportunity for the early education workforce to enhance their skills through higher education and high-quality professional development.

Connecticut has made considerable state investment in its high-quality state preschool programs for three and four-year olds, now budgeted at \$110 million in state Fiscal Year 2016. The state has increased the number of state preschool program spaces five times since State Fiscal Year 2007. In the most recent expansion for FY 2015, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved, expanding state preschool programs by 1,020 spaces. That brings the Fiscal Year 2016 current total of spaces to 14,852 (including those spaces that are used as wrap-around or extended day). Connecticut's ability to increase state preschool spaces will be limited by the state budget, however, the governor's office is committed to supporting quality early childhood and has limited rescissions wherever possible in order to maintain the state's existing high-quality preschool programs. Additional preschool slots have been added through use of Tobacco Settlement Funds, up to \$10M per year. According to the 2013 NIEER "State Preschool Yearbook", Connecticut ranked third behind only the District of Columbia and New Jersey in spending per child for state preschool programs.

The above commitments and investments have helped the OEC to secure the PDG and increase 430 high-quality preschool spaces and improve 282 existing preschool spaces for eligible four-year olds in 13 Subgrantee communities across the state. This represents an 4.8% increase in the percentage of eligible four-year olds served in high-quality state preschool programs compared to all four-year-olds currently served, and a 2.9% increase compared to all three and four-year olds currently served in state preschool programs.

The OEC is currently building on the "quality" and "improvement" components of its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to include the development of a statewide professional development program for early childhood professionals and the recently approved Core Knowledge and Competency (CKC) standards for all early childhood professionals to complement the existing CKCs for teachers. Additionally, the OEC has increased the frequency of licensing inspections (occurring every

10-12 months) and state bond funds to improve early childhood facilities.

Originally defined in our application, the structure for implementing a Quality Improvement System (QIS) was to contract with a single coordinating agency who would then subcontract with five “hubs” to deliver training and technical assistance aligned with Connecticut's QRIS standards, criteria and indicators.

The OEC is in the final stages of this contracting process and has selected United Way of Connecticut, the state's Child Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) provider, as the means by which it will implement its QIS model. A few changes have been made to the contract which no longer includes subcontracting with hubs to deliver training and technical assistance. Instead, funds have been shifted to support early childhood providers to meet new requirements of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which redefines health and safety requirements for child care providers, outlines family-friendly eligibility policies, and ensures that parents and the general public have transparent information about the child care choices available to them. The OEC, through its QIS delivery model, is committed to statewide support to ensure new CCDF requirements can be met, as well as to continue to support programs to meet and exceed state licensing and national accreditation requirements and to support trauma informed practice. The implementation of the above QIS model will help build capacity for high-quality preschool programs and ensure greater delivery and access to programs.

1(c) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children in the High-Need Communities served by the grant that are ready for kindergarten as determined by the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment or, if the State does not yet have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, other valid and reliable means of determining school readiness.

In the Year 2 APR, grantees will provide disaggregated data on the school readiness of the children served by the grant. This may include information collected about the children served by the grant at the end of their 2015-16 preschool year or in their 2016-17 kindergarten year. States may provide data from a sample of children (e.g., a sample being used for any evaluation).

In the Year 1 APR, grantees must describe their progress towards identifying the measures, methods, and data on the school readiness of children served by the Preschool Development Grant. In the narrative below provide the following information:

- The name of the assessment tool(s) and the Essential Domains of School Readiness measured;
- When the assessment tool(s) is/are given (e.g., in preschool and/or kindergarten);
- Whether the assessment is mandated by the State, and for which children;
- How long the State has been using the assessment tool(s);
- Whether the assessment tool(s) is/are implemented throughout the High-Need Community and/or Statewide;
- Whether the State provides or will provide training for local staff administering the assessment. If so, describe the requirements including processes to ensure continued reliability in the administration of the measure;
- If school readiness data is reported to the State, describe when and how data are reported.

Also, please describe, if applicable:

- The State's definition of "school readiness;"
- Disaggregated information about children's school readiness on individual domains or subsets of the measure;
- School readiness data for children disaggregated by subgroup (e.g., students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian, not Pacific Islander; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; White, not Hispanic; two or more races; with disabilities; English learners; and from any other subgroups the state determines appropriate; and
- How the State will continue to make progress in meeting this GPRA measure.

As described in the OEC's original application, in 2013 Connecticut joined a multi-state consortium supported by federal funds, to develop a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), aligned to Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards, addressing all essential domains of school readiness. Information from this assessment system will inform communities and schools as they prioritize resources and plan improvement efforts in State Preschool Programs. The consortium is led by Maryland, who serves as fiduciary for the Enhanced Assessment Grant to support this work. The Consortium has been collaborating on the development of a joint KEA, based upon a prior version developed by two of the member states through their Race to The Top-Early Learning Challenge grants (Maryland and Ohio). This new KEA will be an improvement over Connecticut's current Kindergarten Entry Inventory due to the multiple means of administration, the use of technology and targeted professional development. This tool will provide information on each child's learning and development across the essential domains of school readiness (Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts and Physical Development).

The new KEA will be administered by trained teachers in the first eight weeks of school. While Connecticut's current Kindergarten Entry Inventory relies solely upon teacher's global ratings, the new instrument will use multiple methods of assessment, including items where students are asked to select the appropriate response (selected-response items), performance tasks and observational rubrics that are consistent with nationally recognized technical standards, research and best practices to assess all children upon entry to Kindergarten. Reporting will be available online for teachers, administrators, early-childhood educators and families as well as for export to Connecticut's longitudinal data system.

In fall 2015, Connecticut implemented a pilot of the KEA in 37 schools across 18 school districts. The pilot involved 62 teachers and 264 students, chosen by the teachers. Each teacher selected 5 students who represented a range of the students in their classroom. Overall the pilot findings support the design of the KEA. Feedback on the survey indicated support of the overall design and item level feedback indicated that in general the items were performing as intended. The results of the pilot will further inform the development of the KEA in preparation of the fall 2016 field test.

Originally, Connecticut planned to initiate a field test of the KEA in fall 2015, with census administration in fall 2016. Due to its involvement in the consortium, and the readiness of other states to conduct the field test, the Consortium has changed its timeline and all states involved, including Connecticut, will now conduct a field test in fall 2016. The goal of the KEA field test across the consortium is to collect item data from a broad sample of students in order to inform item selection for the operational KEA in fall 2017 and beyond. It will also provide an opportunity for Connecticut to rehearse, and evaluate the logistics of the broader implementation of the KEA, including the professional development and technology components. PDG high-need communities will be included as appropriate in the field test.

Prior to the field test, comprehensive teacher training will help ensure valid and reliable KEA data. Training, developed by John Hopkins University in collaboration with the Consortium, will be conducted in person and will be available online, allowing individuals to review material at their own pace. KEA performance tasks will have well-defined rubrics that clearly differentiate student performance by score point. Before teachers are allowed to score operational student work, they must demonstrate their ability to accurately score student work by achieving a level of accuracy (to be determined) in which adjacent, but not discrepant, scores will be allowed. The industry standard is a minimum of 80 percent exact agreement, but this standard will be vetted before implementation.

Opportunities for early childhood educators and administrators to share instructional resources and to develop a shared knowledge base will be incorporated in the new KEA through an engaging professional learning community that integrates features of popular social-media tools. The enhanced learning community will incorporate features of social-networking services, in order for individuals to easily post, collect and organize resources and ideas as well as to "follow" individuals and topics. The resources will be tagged and then recommended to teachers based on their personal profiles and their interests and needs.

The OEC, in collaboration with the State Department of Education (SDE), anticipates building a network of district and regional educators to serve as Kindergarten Entry Coordinators. These coordinators will facilitate the ongoing training of Kindergarten teachers utilizing the technical assistance developed by John Hopkins University. In addition, the coordinators will oversee district and regional administration and data submission to the Department of Education.

The Office of Early Childhood is working in partnership with the State Department of Education to coordinate implementation of the new KEI, which will be called a Revised Kindergarten Entrance

Inventory. The Department of Education will be responsible to:

- Maintain administration of KEI data collection
- Include KEI data in the State Longitudinal Data System
- Provide technical assistance to coordinators on KEI administration and any modifications
- Provide periodic recalibration and training for coordinators

Funding of up to \$2M has been set aside by the OEC for the fall 2016 field test. As the revised KEI is still being developed, the CSDE has not yet determined with OEC how and when the data will be reported. It is important to note that Connecticut's revised KEI will not be designed as a tool for teacher evaluation, program evaluation, or to determine an individual child's eligibility for Kindergarten. Rather, data from the KEI will lead to better instruction and more informed decision-making which will lead to more effective strategies to reduce achievement gaps.

Connecticut does not have a definition of school readiness, but rather recognizes that early learning and growth is an ongoing process that begins before birth and is influenced by many factors. Often, attention is given to children's skills at transition points, such as Kindergarten entry, however, no one set of skills at any given time can determine school readiness. The OEC encourages families, communities and schools to work together to support children's early learning and growth, each is on the right path to supporting children when:

- Families have the resources and knowledge to support their children's health and development - beginning before birth
- Communities support families, schools, early caregivers and children in a coordinated way
- Schools and early learning settings support all children, no matter their background or skill level
- Children are eager and ready to learn and grow

While recognizing that timelines of the consortium have shifted for the revised KEI field test and census administration, the OEC has partnered with the University of Connecticut (UConn) Neag School of Education, who is conducting the third-party evaluation of PDG, to determine interim measures of school readiness until details of the revised KEI field test and census implementation have been solidified.

The UConn research team has undertaken several steps and enacted several processes to collect student-level data and support the data collection and analysis efforts of the PDG. By the end of February 2016, data from approximately 185 children enrolled in 15 PDG sites will be collected. This data includes assessments of early literacy and numeracy from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) as well as the following subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson IV: word attack, applied problems, calculations, math facts fluency, letter-word identification, oral vocabulary, and picture vocabulary. In addition to academic measure, the UConn research team is also collecting measures of social and emotional development as measured by the Behavior Assessment Scale for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2) and scored from teacher and parent reports of student data. While still in the planning stages, the initial thinking moving forward is to assess PDG children two to three times each year and possibly just before entering Kindergarten to measure ongoing progress and then, readiness using the assessments outlined above. These measures would be in place and used in conjunction with any data that would be available and pertain to PDG children through the KEI.

Originally, UConn proposed 280 PDG students be assessed in the fall of 2015. Data collection efforts for PDG had originally been coupled with a previously approved request to evaluate preschool children in Connecticut. All data collection efforts were dependent upon timely receipt of student enrollment information for individual preschool centers. Unforeseeable delays in reporting of enrollment data by external (to both the UConn evaluation team and the OEC) partners delayed data collection into November, at which point the Thanksgiving and winter holidays imposed limitations on what days assessors could enter schools. As a result, though several dozen children were assessed in 2015, data collection began in earnest in January 2016. Data now obtained can no longer be

considered a baseline measure of student performance, however, UCONN plans to use this data as a benchmark for midyear assessments planned for years two and four. It also gives initial measure of variability in measures among students enrolled across multiple sites in the state.

For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:

1(d) GPRA Performance Measure: The number of States that collect and analyze data on State Preschool Program quality, including the structural elements of quality specified in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs.

N/A

Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

In this section of the APR, States will report on their progress addressing the Preschool Development Grant's selection criteria. The State should read the questions carefully and report in the narrative fields directly below the questions. Please include any data, data notes or formulas to help the readers understand the State's narrative responses.

1. Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria "C" of the application)

Describe the State's use of funds received over the grant period for State Preschool Program infrastructure and quality improvements, including the State's efforts to implement a system of monitoring and support at the State level toward activities such as those described in Section (C)(1)(a-k) of the NIA.

Note: States will report amounts and percentage of funds for State Preschool Program infrastructure and High-Quality Preschool Programs in the Competitive Preference Priority 3 Chart.

Connecticut plans to use no more than five percent of the funds received over the grant period for state preschool program quality infrastructure. It will use these funds in conjunction with existing state funds to build a high-quality preschool infrastructure.

Since the OEC's initial application, no more than five percent of the funds received over the grant period have been used for state preschool program infrastructure. Funds for infrastructure have been used in the following ways and directly address activities (c), (d), (i), (f) and (j) described in Section (C)(1)(a-k) of the NIA:

- Hiring a Data Accountability Project Manager
- Hiring a Family Engagement Project Manager
- Enhancing the quality of child-teacher interactions through use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Conducting a third-party evaluation

In May of 2015, the OEC hired two full-time Project Manager positions --one for Data and Accountability, the other for Family Engagement. The Project Manager of Data and Accountability works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates all aspects of the PDG including monitoring, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. The position also meets regularly with Grant Managers of other state funding streams to coordinate data and reporting requirements when appropriate. Additionally, this Project Manager directs the efforts of the local School Readiness Liaisons, the positions responsible for coordinating the efforts of their Councils which have methods in place to determine the availability of high-quality preschool programs. This Project Manager also arranges professional development and technical assistance for Subgrantees and their early learning providers. Since May, this position has completed the required federal Monitoring Plan, designed, implemented and monitored monthly enrollment reports for each Subgrantee, scheduled and facilitated regular meetings with Subgrantees in both large groups and one-on-one, designed and implemented both provider and community-level PDG Interim Reports, monitored all Subgrantee budgets and spending and executed contracts with state partners to deliver trainings and professional development as well as to conduct a third-party evaluation. This position will continue to refine

monitoring and accountability practices and work with Subgrantees, OEC staff, state partners, contractors and other stakeholders to ensure the goals and objectives of the PDG are met.

The OEC has also hired a full-time Family Engagement Project Manager to deepen local family engagement practices by working with Subgrantees to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. To do this, the Family Engagement Project Manager has implemented and facilitated quarterly Family Engagement meetings with each Subgrantee. All family engagement efforts are conducted using the following organizing principles that efforts be: family centered; focused on quality, trusting and mutually respectful relationships; strengths based; linked to learning; and, community specific.

The Family Engagement Project Manager also works with Sugrantees to identify strategies and promising practices around outreach and recruitment of eligible children, issues of inclusion and serving children with disabilities and supporting a seamless birth-to-third grade continuum.

Thus far, two quarterly meetings have occurred with each Subgrantee's Family Engagement Team which consist of School Readiness Liaisons, PDG provider staff including teachers, aides and directors, public school employees and coordinators of early childhood special education and related services. To date, each team has created a community-coordinated, systematic outreach and recruitment plan to serve eligible children as well as created a compendium of successful outreach and recruitment strategies to share across Subgrantee communities. Together, the plans and compendium have helped to achieve a current 99% enrollment rate of eligible 4-year olds in PDG funded classrooms (up from 88% as of December 1), 11% enrollment of children with disabilities, 4% enrollment of children who are homeless, 19% who are dual-language learners and 1% enrollment of children who are in foster care.

A goal identified by the Family Engagement Project Manager will be to invite parents/guardians of eligible children to the quarterly Family Engagement Team meetings and better incorporate parent/guardian voices in the family engagement process. In order to measure progress on this goal, baseline information on family and teacher attitudes regarding family engagement was collected using the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationships Quality (FPTRQ) Measures. Developed by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the measures assess the quality of the relationship between families and providers/teachers for children birth to age five. Using the FPTRQ, the OEC will be able to assess the relationship from both the parent and provider/teacher perspectives. This information will be critical to helping the OEC and the Family Engagement Project Manager to support providers in building their programs' capacity to engage parents. Data from the FPTRQ is currently being analyzed by the University of Connecticut and results will be available in early spring.

The Family Engagement Project Manager is also laying the groundwork to assess current collaborations that provide for a birth-through-third-grade continuum. This will be an ongoing effort that will include representation from the broader birth-to-third grade continuum which will help identify gaps in data, resources and information as well as any challenges and barriers to creating a seamless continuum for children ages zero to eight.

No more than five percent of funds received have also been used to enhance the quality of child-teacher interactions through the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The CLASS tool measures adult-child relationships in three domains and 10 dimensions to help teachers and other adults identify areas of strength and areas of improvement as they support children's learning. PDG funds have been used to train 27 people in Subgrantee communities in use of the CLASS instrument. Of those trained, 17 have become reliable CLASS raters and have been deployed to assess PDG classrooms for the explicit purpose of program improvement. To date, just over 70% of all PDG

classrooms have been assessed using the tool and scores have been shared with teachers and directors of each PDG program. Additionally, scores are shared with coaches who are assigned to each PDG lead teacher who can help integrate the scores into the individualized professional development and learning goals of that teacher.

Lastly, grants funds have allowed the OEC to partner with the University of Connecticut (UCONN) Neag School of Education, to conduct the third-party evaluation and support the data collection and analysis efforts of the PDG. By the end of February 2016, data from approximately 185 children enrolled in 15 PDG sites will be collected. This data includes assessments of early literacy and numeracy from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) as well as the following subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson IV: word attack, applied problems, calculations, math facts fluency, letter-word identification, oral vocabulary, and picture vocabulary. In addition to academic measure, the UCONN research team is also collecting measures of social and emotional development as measured by the Behavior Assessment Scale for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2) and scored from teacher and parent reports of student data. While still in the planning stages, the initial thinking moving forward is to assess PDG children two to three times each year and possibly just before entering Kindergarten to measure ongoing progress and then, readiness using the assessments outlined above.

As mentioned previously in this section, in addition to assessing children, the UCONN evaluation team is also using the FPTRQ measures, a validated measure of family engagement, to analyze the family engagement efforts within each Subgrantee community. The FPTRQ has been completed by each PDG teacher and parent in January and February of 2016. Results will be aggregated by the OEC and UCONN in spring 2016.

It is important to note that all other structural elements are currently in place within Connecticut's high-quality preschool programs; however PDG funds are not being used to directly affect or implement those structural elements. As an example, the OEC is currently building on the 'quality' and 'improvement' components of its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to include the development of a statewide professional development program for early childhood professionals. This Quality Improvement System will incorporate recently approved Core Knowledge and Competency (CKC) standards for early childhood professionals to complement the existing CKCs for teachers. Additionally, the OEC has increased the frequency of licensing inspections (occurring every 10-12 months) and funding to improve early childhood facilities. The OEC is also in the testing phase of its new Early Childhood Information System which will be linked to the existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

The state will continue to work with its partners to ensure grant funds continue to be used to ensure quality in PDG preschool programs.

2. Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community (Selection Criteria D of application)

Describe the progress the State has made during the reporting year to implement and sustain voluntary high quality preschool programs for eligible children in two or more High-Need Communities (Selection Criteria D(4) of the application) that include **ALL** structural elements listed below that are included in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

- High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;
- High-quality professional development for all staff;
- A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications;
- A Full-Day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- Evidence-based health and safety standards.

Please describe the progress the State has made in establishing High-Quality Preschool Programs that include ALL structural elements listed above that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality.

Connecticut's ambitious and achievable plan, funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), was built on the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) existing state preschool infrastructure. PDG has allowed Connecticut to expand access to high-quality state preschool programs and improve the quality of existing state preschool programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 712 eligible preschoolers.

As outlined in Connecticut's application, building on our existing state preschool infrastructure used existing School Readiness Councils to implement PDG at the local level. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness program.

At the close of Year 1, Connecticut was successfully partnering with 13 Councils to deliver high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state. Of those eligible children, 55% were being served in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces.

According to recent data compiled via PDG Interim Provider Reports, every PDG early learning provider is implementing almost all of the structural elements of high-quality defined in the grant, for both expansion and improved classrooms. For those structural elements not in place, the OEC is working with local School Readiness Liaisons to understand the barriers to implementation as well as what types of supports can be provided to ensure all programs meet the definition of high-quality as described in the grant.

Throughout all sites, high-staff qualifications are being met and every teacher in a PDG classroom has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or has a BA and has attained the state's approved alternative Early Childhood Teaching Credential (ECTC). Data has been verified through PDG Interim Provider reports as well as through the Connecticut Early Childhood Workforce Registry.

While every PDG teacher has the approved high-qualifications, recent PDG Interim Provider reports have shown that not all instructional staff salaries are comparable to local K-12 instructional staff salaries. Through this monitoring mechanism, the OEC has identified six PDG teachers who are not making a comparable K-12 salary as defined by the grant. The OEC has reached out to the local School Readiness Liaison in each instance and early learning providers are being notified of their noncompliance. In most instances, the difference in salary is minimal and ranges from \$2,000-\$5,000. All programs will work to amend this issue to remain in compliance before the close of the current program year.

All PDG classrooms, including those with expansion spaces, are meeting several of the other high-quality structural elements defined in the grant including the state-funded mandate of a class size of no more than 18, as well as a child-to-staff ratio of no more than 9:1. Additionally, all PDG funded classrooms are in either school-day, school year programs (6-hour days), or full-day, full-year programs (10-hour days). 239 expansion spaces are located in 10-hour day, full-year programs while the remaining 191 are housed in 6-hour school-day programs. Local School Readiness Liaisons monitor these structural elements by checking in randomly with sites --the OEC is currently creating a monitoring form for Liaisons which would report the frequency by which they monitor PDG classrooms for structural elements of quality.

Every PDG classroom is receiving high-quality professional development that focuses on four key areas: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social emotional development, Response to Intervention and Special Education Referral. This high-quality professional development, along with assessment of all PDG classrooms using CLASS ensures that developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments are present and aligned with the Connecticut ELDS. The high-quality professional learning model was designed specifically for the PDG and is delivered and evaluated based on adult learning theories and current research and practices. It tests a unique professional learning delivery model, supported by best practices and peer-reviewed literature on teacher effectiveness, that includes highly individualized coaching and consultation as the primary medium to influence knowledge, understanding and practices within a classroom as opposed to the 'cookie-cutter' large group trainings which are more commonly utilized. The design, delivery, and assessment of the high-quality professional learning are rooted in core competencies and delivered by approved facilitators and coaches that hold the competencies needed to address learning needs.

Each PDG program and classroom also participates in evidence-based health and safety standards as measured by either OEC's licensing division, NAEYC accreditation and/or ECERS assessments. Every PDG funded early learning provider must be NAEYC accredited, or attain accreditation within three years of being funded. Interim measures include an ECERS rating within the classroom at least once per year. Currently 25 of 37 PDG funded programs are NAEYC accredited. The 12 yet-to-be accredited programs will receive an ECERS rating by the end of the program year (June 2016) and results will be monitored by both the OEC and local School Readiness Liaison.

All programs have reported that they are implementing some form of individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning. The OEC will gather additional data to understand specifically how programs are defining and meeting this high-quality standard.

Each PDG program site has reported that on-site comprehensive services have been implemented and are accessible to all eligible children and their families. Almost every provider reported that within 45-days the program ensures every child receives a variety of screenings ranging from hearing and vision, the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), and height and weight to ensure each child is within normal range according to research based standards. In many cases, PDG funds were able to introduce for the first time, or enhance these screenings within PDG classrooms.

Also available in many programs are enhanced opportunities to engage families. Many programs have used funds to host parent workshops and/or form parent advisory committees. Many PDG teachers and directors are also involved in the Subgrantee Family Engagement Teams convened by the state's Family Engagement Project Manager as described earlier in this report.

Another commonality across PDG programs is their participation in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide nutritious meals and snacks for children. Many programs also reported that PDG funds have allowed them to introduce or enhance this structural element by increasing the hours of a nutritionist as well as launching various food and physical fitness activities for children and families. Many programs too have been able to hire additional case managers, social workers or family engagement outreach workers to provide referrals and linkages to families as well as coordinate onsite services such as SNAP.

Lastly, as mentioned previously in this APR, while all programs reported meeting the structural element of inclusion of children with disabilities, throughout our PDG communities more work must

be done in order to provide the necessary special education and related services in all PDG settings. To ensure this high-quality standard is met with rigor, looking ahead to Year 2 a priority of the OEC will be collaboration with school districts to deliver special education and related services integrated into the normal routines and activities of PDG classrooms. In most cases, community school districts are receptive to this priority. In addition, planning in the spring allows for the lead time that was not provided in Year 1. The OEC and Subgrantees, along with local special education coordinators, have also committed to finalizing MOUs which would clearly articulate how best to allocate resources and serve children with disabilities in all PDG classrooms, regardless of setting. Also, recognizing that establishing an IEP takes time, the OEC will begin to track not only the number of children with IEPs, but also the number of children who have been referred for further evaluation.

In total, 28 new classrooms with 430 expansion spaces have been introduced in Connecticut for the first time and an additional 282 spaces have been improved because of the PDG. Included in each of these classrooms are the 12 high-quality structural elements defined in the grant that undoubtedly will have a marked effect on the future readiness and success of children when they enter Kindergarten.

Table 6 - Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

Describe the number and percent of Eligible Children served and the cost per slot. Please explain if *Year 1 Target* from the application and *Year 1 Actual* in **Table 6** differ, and any approved changes in targets for Years 2-4.

As described in Connecticut's application, per-child costs were determined for two main space types:

- Six-hour, school-day, school-year spaces
- Ten-hour, full-day, year-round spaces

Both spaces were calculated as a percentage increase to existing state preschool program rates. Rates for both expansion and improved spaces is approximately 2.1 times the state preschool program rates to support the high-quality elements described in the grant. All costs are based on the state-funded teacher-child ratio of 9:1, with no more than 18 children per classroom.

In order to build a per child rate, the OEC first determined what elements were needed to promote a high-quality preschool classroom. These elements included staff, administration and oversight, comprehensive services, professional development, transportation and physical space.

Staff costs include head teachers as well as assistant teachers, floaters and even substitutes. Salary calculations were based on data and reports provided by the Connecticut Department of Education, the OEC, the Department of Labor and directly reported by Subgrantees. Teacher salaries were calculated using local public school K-12 Teacher data. The average salary included for public school teachers was \$52,419, per salary ranges reported by the Subgrantees in their school districts. According to the State Department of Education's report "2012-13 Average Teacher Salary for New Teachers Working Full-time, by Degree Level - Bachelor's," starting salaries for new teachers ranged from \$40,883 to 46,483, with a statewide average of \$44,743.

Benefits were calculated at 28% which, after research and discussion with Subgrantees, was typical of communities included in the grant. All program administration costs were budgeted low to minimize local administration costs as stipulated in Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the NIA.

Comprehensive service cost estimates included additional staff and consultants at percentages ranging from 5% to 20% of full-time equivalents (FTE) for PDG classrooms. Comprehensive service costs also included those costs stipulated by providers such as the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), to provide early childhood mental health consultation to each PDG classroom. Also included in the cost per child rate were education consultants, health consultants, social workers, family outreach workers, coordinator/assessment staff and nutritionists.

The following expenses were calculated for 10-hour, full-day/full-year costs:

Teacher: 100% FTE at \$67,109
Assistant Teacher: 138% FTE at \$50,600
Floater: 138% FTE at \$36,520
Administration, Fiscal & Audit: 8% FTE at \$8,995
Clerical & Data Collection: 20% FTE at \$12,811
Coordinator/evaluator/monitor: 20% FTE at \$16,640
Education Specialist: 15% FTE at \$16,320
Health/Mental Health/ECCP: 5% FTE and 18% FTE at \$19,136
Social Services/Family Coordinator: 20% FTE at \$10,301
Outreach Worker/Parent Activities: 20% FTE at \$7,168
Nutritionist: 8% FTE at \$7,488
Meals & Snacks: 100% at \$27,855
Classroom Instruction & Assessment: 100% FTE at \$6,750
Professional Development: 100% FTE at \$3,750
Substitutes: 100% FTE at \$2,625
Transportation: 100% FTE at \$1,350
Travel: 100% FTE at \$660
Rent: 100% FTE at \$22,680
Utilities: 100% FTE at \$2,400
Custodian/Security: 8% FTE at \$2,688
Playground Space: 100% FTE at \$4,536
Cost per classroom: \$328,370
Cost per child: \$18,243
Rate per child: \$18,200

The following expenses were calculated for 6-hour, school-day/school-year costs:

Teacher: 100% FTE at \$67,096
Assistant Teacher: 138% FTE at \$36,800
Floater : 138% FTE at \$18,592
Administration, Fiscal & Audit: 8% FTE at \$5,996
Clerical & Data Collection: 20% FTE at \$9,609
Coordinator/evaluator/monitor: 20% FTE at \$12,480
Education Specialist: 15% FTE at \$8,704
Health/Mental Health/ECCP: 5% FTE and 18% FTE at \$19,136
Social Services/Family Coordinator: 20% FTE at \$10,301
Outreach Worker/Parent Activities: 20% FTE at \$7,168
Nutritionist: 8% FTE at \$4,992
Meals & Snacks: 100% FTE at \$17,552
Classroom Instruction & Assessment: 100% FTE at \$6,750
Professional Development: 100% FTE at \$3,000
Substitutes: 100% FTE at \$2,100
Transportation: 100% FTE at \$1,350

Travel: 100% FTE at \$660
Rent: 100% FTE at \$18,900
Utilities: 100% FTE at \$2,000
Custodian/Security: 8% FTE at \$4,480
Playground Space: 100% FTE at \$3,780

Cost per classroom: \$261,446

Cost per child: \$14,425*

Rate per child: \$12,800

*School-year rates were reduced by the anticipated in-kind contribution in school district locations of \$1,725 per space supporting line items such as rent, utilities, playground space and custodial and security.

In addition to the per space rate, Connecticut proposed in its application to significantly increase the opportunity to improve outcomes for children by providing individualized training, professional development and coaching as described earlier in this APR. These rates were calculated in partnership with EASTCONN and totaled \$5,000 per classroom and \$8,000 per community.

Start-up funds for expansion classrooms were also included in the per child cost at a rate of \$25,000 per expansion classroom. Local infrastructure support in the form of increasing the hours of local School Readiness Liaisons was also included and differed based on the current salaries and increased hours of each Liaison position --on average the position was increased 17 hours per week.

After all expenses were calculated, target costs per child included:

- Expansion, 6-hour day, school-year: \$12,800
- Expansion, 10-hour day, year-round: \$18,200
- Improved, part-day to 6-hour-day, school-year: \$8,300
- Improved, existing 6-hour-day, school-year: \$6,800
- Improved, existing 10-hour-day, year-round: \$9,530

Total average costs per space type:

- Expansion Average Rate per Space: \$16,194
- Improved Average Rate per Space: \$9,710

Since its originally proposed application, target rates have not changed. At the end of the state fiscal year, the OEC will be collecting additional data to better understand the true cost of delivering this high-quality program.

3. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships (Selection Criteria E of the application)

Describe the extent to which the State has collaborated with each Subgrantee to ensure that each Subgrantee is effectively implementing High-Quality Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the application) and how the State ensures strong partnerships between each Subgrantee and LEAs or other Early Learning Providers, as appropriate.

The OEC has implemented several strategies to ensure collaboration with each Subgrantee in order to effectively implement the PDG. Key strategies include:

- Two dedicated staff to manage relationships specific to the PDG
- Regular meetings every other month with all Subgrantees to review PDG implementation, successes and challenges
- Regular phone calls with Subgrantees to check-in on individual progress
- An 'open-door' policy in which Subgrantees can contact OEC staff at any time to share successes or concerns related to the PDG
- Quarterly family engagement meetings
- MOUs which outline the roles and responsibilities of both Subgrantees and the OEC
- Monitoring protocols to ensure accountability of both Subgrantees as well as the OEC

Collaboration and partnership between the OEC and Subgrantees is founded on the existing School Readiness Council infrastructure put forth by the state both in statute and in written policies and guidance. Specifically for the PDG, the OEC has built on this infrastructure by creating MOUs with each Subgrantee. The MOU and existing guidance and policies include items and assurances for both the state and Subgrantee and also summarize the roles of each. When a grant of this scale is implemented, MOUs become critical resources to ensure stronger collaboration so that each entity is aware of, and held accountable for, their role in successful implementation.

Professional program staff within the OEC have a comprehensive history of working collaboratively with School Readiness Councils identified in this grant. In turn, School Readiness Councils have existing subcontracts with early learning providers to provide services under this grant as part of Connecticut's quality state preschool programs. The OEC and School Readiness Councils, as well as early learning providers, have a solid and proven track record of working together to provide high-quality services that meet the needs of our youngest learners. This long-term relationship and history of providing quality preschool spaces in Connecticut has been invaluable to supporting the planning, development and implementation of the PDG.

As mentioned earlier, the OEC has hired two staff positions specifically to manage the day-to-day activities of the PDG. The Data and Accountability Project Manager works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates monitoring, payments, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. To ensure strong partnership, this position meets with Subgrantees regularly to discuss local monitoring efforts as well as to receive input and guidance on documents created by the OEC to monitor eligibility, enrollment and other items.

The Family Engagement Project Manager works to deepen local family engagement practices by working with Subgrantees to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. This position works very closely with Subgrantees, Liaisons and early learning providers to ensure strong partnerships and collaboration. In addition to meeting once quarterly with each Subgrantee community, this position also meets regularly one-on-one with early learning providers, Liaisons and others to discuss ways to partner more closely in order to better serve children and their families.

Together, these two positions have been critical to building on existing relationships with Subgrantees

and both have 'open door' policies which allow Subgrantees to freely discuss their successes, challenges and concerns regarding the PDG. This open door policy has been critical to building mutually respectful and trusting relationships where together, the OEC and Subgrantees can address issues in real-time and overcome any barriers to high-quality implementation. In one instance, a Subgrantee stated after expressing several concerns regarding the delivery of professional development within their community: "Thank you again for your thoughtful and complete response and also for your own candor. It's reassuring to know we can have these conversations! I want to 'do right' by the program, the community, and this grant and it makes a difference to know that I will be heard..." In another community, a Liaison stated the following when prompted about their perception of the state's ongoing collaboration with them: "OEC PDG staff have skillfully balanced their support by holding our hand when needed and letting us stand on our own as we grew confident in the implementation of this comprehensive support for our families. Torrington is among one of the largest PDG communities and has been fortunate to receive 33 improved slots in existing centers and 47 new expanded slots that are located in the public school. The level of coordination and constant support for this initiative as two agencies came together (SDE and OEC) has been timely, efficient and flexible when needed. It is their accessibility, transparency and skill set that has made this experience for our community a great success."

The PDG has augmented program monitoring, accountability and evaluation of each preschool program by expanding the capacity and breadth of the School Readiness Liaison, a position that serves as the central point of contact between the Subgrantee and the OEC. Enhancement of the Liaison positions means a greater focus on program quality and accountability, monitoring and support, standards implementation, program evaluation and finances. With PDG support, 12 Liaison positions have been increased by an average of 17 hours per week.

Together with the Project Manager for Data and Accountability, Liaisons monitor local progress towards goals outlined in the grant. In the summer of 2015, the Data and Accountability Project Manager developed monthly enrollment reports for both Subgrantee and early learning providers. These reports have been shared with Liaisons who work to complete and submit them for predetermined reporting periods. The Data and Accountability Project Manager has worked to ensure the PDG reporting schedule matches with existing state preschool program reporting periods and also trained Liaisons on the use of the report. Each month, reports are submitted by early learning providers to their local Liaison, who then review and submit them to the OEC. Data is then entered in master files to view trends over time and to work with Subgrantees if improvement is needed. The process has been implemented seamlessly and to date, 100% of enrollment reports have been submitted on time for each enrollment period.

In preparation for this Annual Performance Report, and as outlined in the statewide PDG Monitoring Plan, the Data and Accountability Project Manager developed PDG Interim Reports to be completed both at the Subgrantee and early learning provider level. These reports serve as a point-in-time, mid-year review of the PDG. The reports were made available on an online, secure platform where both Liaisons and early learning providers could complete and submit them to the OEC. Barring a few technical issues with the online platform, the process worked smoothly and again, 100% of reports were submitted on time for review. The reports provide a deeper look into the quality elements of the PDG at the provider level, elements such as teacher qualifications, teacher salary, comprehensive services, inclusion, staff-to-child ratios and class sizes. The reports also included the revision of local Subgrantee budgets and documents from the Connecticut Early Childhood Professional Registry. At the Subgrantee level, PDG Interim Reports included higher-level questions related to coordination and monitoring, enhancing the Liaison position and also included the option for Subgrantees to upload MOUs related to the PDG. A detailed Scope of Work was also submitted with each Subgrantee report to track progress against stated goals as well as to provide supports Subgrantees may need in meeting their goals.

A key concern raised by several Subgrantees through the various methods of communication described above was coordination of the multiple requirements of the grant. Several partners are involved in the implementation and delivery of the high-quality components outlined in Connecticut's grant including the University of Connecticut, EASTCONN, the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership and the work of local Family Engagement Teams. In many programs, a mix-delivery model is being implemented and teachers and staff in those PDG classrooms must also adhere to the

multiple other requirements of state and federal funding streams they receive, as well as local district and community early childhood improvement plans.

To address this issue, the OEC's PDG Project Managers, EASTCONN, UCONN and ECCP have all met and had multiple conversations about how to collaborate more intentionally around efforts that require time in PDG classrooms or the presence of PDG staff at meetings and/or trainings. Meetings and conversations outlined the various timelines being implemented and a general calendar is being developed to ensure partners know what to expect and when. Additionally, a quick summary of efforts related to professional development, CLASS, ECCP, Family Engagement and the third-party evaluation is being created to share with Subgrantees and early learning providers to better clarify expectations.

The OEC and its partners believe strong collaboration is key to successful implementation of the PDG and will continue to strengthen efforts that exemplify quality and partnership to better serve children and families.

4. Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum (Section F of the application)

Describe progress the State has made for alignment within a birth through third grade continuum in activities for birth through age five programs ((F)(1)(a-b) in the NIA) and kindergarten through third grade ((F)(2)(a-d) in the NIA).

The OEC is committed to developing a seamless birth-to-third-grade continuum - a continuum that will ensure smooth transitions for children and families *through* the continuum and alignment of values and practices *across* the continuum. To do this, the OEC will build upon existing collaborative efforts with the State Department of Education, local school districts, school readiness councils, early care and education providers, families and other community program partners.

Family engagement efforts mentioned previously will help to address enhancement of the birth to third grade continuum in each PDG community. 13 Family Engagement Teams have been established that include school readiness liaisons, principals, directors of community programs, teachers, families and other community members. These teams are reviewing literature, quality family engagement frameworks and toolkits, promising strategies from the field and existing family engagement efforts to create plans that will deepen family engagement in each community.

Beginning in the second year of the grant, these teams will be expanded to include colleagues from the broader birth to third grade continuum including, among others, private in-home child care providers. Community surveys conducted in Year 1 reference continuum colleagues who will be included in this process.

The expanded teams will review the status of the birth-to-third-grade continuum in each community and determine how resources available through PDG can best be used to support enhancement of the continuum. The community surveys referenced above contain questions regarding the continuum, and along with existing community documentation and team members' knowledge and experience, will inform the conversation. The teams, as well as their work, will expand and evolve over time in a community-driven process.

The OEC is currently considering the use of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) to deepen family engagement and increase capacity for smooth transitions of children and families into PDG classrooms and subsequently into Kindergarten classrooms. PTHVP is described in one of the case studies included in the Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family and Community Engagement commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education as a high-quality, successful strategy to deepen

family engagement while creating capacity for smooth transitions from one phase of education to another.

Additional strategies to support smooth transitions include:

- Plans to collaborate with the State Department of Education to develop an online toolkit for families whose children are transitioning to Kindergarten.
- Expanding MOUs that outline the delivery of special education and related services to PDG children with IEPs to include planning for the transition of PDG children to district Kindergarten classrooms. Transition planning might include kindergarten teachers, PDG teachers, family observations in PDG and Kindergarten classrooms, family observations in Kindergarten classrooms, transition meetings among PDG and Kindergarten teachers with families of children who are transitioning and the transfer of records from PDG to the district.

The family engagement component of PDG acknowledges family engagement as a developmental process initiated in infant/toddler and preschool programs. PDG programs provide a context in which the mutually respectful, trusting relationships needed for quality family engagement can be developed - a context in which parents can be supported in first visualizing, and then actualizing support of their children's education. In establishing these relationships, we will uphold the following principles:

- A focus on what we can learn from families rather than on what families can learn from us;
- A recognition that we must go where families are rather than expecting them to come to us;
- An understanding of how families want, and are able to, engage with us around their children's learning rather than offering a one-size fits all approach;
- An ongoing, reciprocal communication and exchange of knowledge using families' preferred mode of communication;
- An acknowledgement and appreciation of how important families are to our success in teaching their children;
- An identification of resources in the community to support them.

In the quarterly meeting process, ongoing assessment of current family engagement strategies in terms of the above values will occur, as well as exploring promising new strategies that reflect those values.

To that end, in January 2016, the OEC has conducted and collected family and teacher surveys of attitudes relative to family engagement utilizing the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality Measures. The surveys have been turned over to PDG's third party evaluators for analysis and will be shared with Family Engagement Teams in late spring. Ongoing work will be focused on the results as appropriate.

To date, two quarterly meetings have been conducted. The first set the stage for the quarterly meeting process. The second focused on outreach and recruitment for Year 2 of the PDG. In addition, community teams planned for the inclusion of families in the quarterly meeting process beginning in March 2016. Moving forward, families will have the opportunity to express their choices and preferences relative to family engagement and participation in the birth to third grade continuum as well as the kinds of access to programs and supports they need.

In addition to engaging families as described above, efforts to engage hard-to-reach families targeted in our grant application have resulted in a community-coordinated, systematic outreach and

recruitment plan with accountability described in detail elsewhere in this document.

PDG's provision of grant-specified components of high-quality programming will, by definition, ensure that children enrolled in PDG classrooms are well-prepared for Kindergarten. The third-party evaluation of PDG participants conducted by the University of Connecticut will inform the ongoing provision of program components and ultimately determine how well-prepared or "ready" PDG children are when they enter Kindergarten. Additionally, the high-quality professional development being delivered will address gaps in teacher preparation to further ensure quality programming. The coaching provided, which incorporates CLASS observations and ECCP services, will also support teachers in the provision of the quality programming required to ensure that PDG-eligible children are well-prepared for Kindergarten.

OEC's implementation of PDG will increase collaboration between preschool and Kindergarten teachers through:

- Possible collaborative training in the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project that will enhance both PDG and Kindergarten teachers' capacity to develop mutually respectful trusting relationships with families and optimize family engagement in both PDG and district Kindergarten classrooms
- Expanding MOUs between PDG early learning providers and school districts to include planning for PDG children and families transitioning to Kindergarten. Planning would include meetings with families, PDG and Kindergarten teachers, reciprocal observations and efficient exchange of information and documents

Section A: Part C - Competitive Preference Priorities

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe the progress the State has made on its credible plan for obtaining and using non-Federal matching funds to support the implementation of its ambitious and achievable plan during the grant period. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period. Please describe any changes made to the data reported in **Table 7(a)**; explain if your *Year 1 Target* differs from the *Year 1 Actual*.

As outlined in Connecticut's PDG application, state match funds in Year 1 total \$5,384,589. This match is achieved through support of the state's early care and education infrastructure including additional licensing staff hired for the OEC's Child Care and Licensing Division and support of the implementation of The Early Childhood Information System (ECIS). Additionally, in order to promote integration of eligible children in economically diverse and inclusive settings, the OEC has also contributed state quality enhancement funds to support non-eligible children in PDG classrooms due to age or income ineligibility. Also included in the state's match was support provided to existing state preschool spaces improved by PDG.

During Year 1 of the PDG, eight licensing staff have been hired for the OEC Child Care and Licensing Division. These licensing staff help to ensure more regular visits to inspect the health and safety standards of PDG and other state preschool classrooms. These positions were hired at an annual average salary of \$63,000 plus benefits. As of December 31, 2015, \$455,143 has been expended to support these positions.

The Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) supports the infrastructure for high-quality early care and education. State funding for ECIS as of December 31, 2015 totaled \$485,186. This funding and system development will allow Connecticut to collect data and information to make data and outcome-driven policy decisions as well as improve efficiency and accountability to help ensure that children and families have access to high quality services. Once fully-implemented, ECIS will have the capacity to monitor enrollment and eligibility of all children funded by PDG as well as help the OEC to collect demographic information as well as attendance trends in all state preschool programs. ECIS will also become a part of the Statewide Longitudinal Information System to track children as they progress through elementary, middle and high school.

In order to promote integration of eligible children in economically diverse and inclusive settings, the state's match also included state quality enhancement funds to support children who were age or income ineligible for PDG. These funds were used primarily to support classroom personnel (i.e. lead teacher), as well as the delivery of comprehensive services for these children. In total, the state has committed \$456,411 to serve 112 non-eligible children in PDG classroom settings and as of December 31, 2015 had spent \$157,484. The amount of match funds provided by the state quality enhancement may decrease minimally due to adjustments in the number of non-eligible children served. Two Subgrantees notified the OEC of changes within improved classrooms that resulted in 34 less non-eligible children being served in PDG classrooms, these changes will reduce the state's match through quality enhancement funds by \$110,559. This reduction amounts to less than 1% of the state's total match dollars over the four-year grant period and will not affect the delivery of high-quality preschool programming to eligible children or the state's ability to meet the competitive preference priority for contributing match funds.

Additional matching funds include state supported preschool spaces that are being improved through PDG. \$1,990,070 has been committed to serve 282 children in existing state preschool spaces that will be improved with additional PDG funds. As of December 31, 2015, the OEC had distributed \$995,035 of this amount to support 282 improved spaces.

As the state is reporting on fiscal year July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016, the data represented in tables and narratives of this APR are displayed as actuals-to-date as of December 31, 2015. Year-end actuals will be available after the close of the state fiscal year on June 30, 2016.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting the Continuum of Early Learning and Development (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in creating a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade, such as high-quality infant and toddler care, home visitation, full-day kindergarten, and before and after care services for, at a minimum, a defined cohort of eligible children and their families within each high need community served by each Subgrantee. For progress *not* made in these areas, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

The OEC is committed to developing a seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth-to-third-grade. To do this, the OEC will build upon existing collaborative efforts with the State Department of Education, local school districts, school readiness councils, early care and education providers, families and other community program partners. In its application, the OEC outlined eight key outcomes to measure the progress of developing and supporting this continuum:

1. Report annual data on children in Subgrantee communities as they progress through the continuum of services from birth through third grade
2. Increase the percentage of children remaining in MIECHV-funded or state-funded home visiting programs until the age of three.
3. Increase the percentage of children in Subgrantee communities who exit Early Head Start at age three and enter a high-quality preschool program.
4. Increase the percentage of children exiting from home visiting programs at age three and enrolling in high-quality state preschool programs.
5. Increase the percentage of children exiting from Birth to Three programs at age three in Subgrantee communities who enroll in high-quality state preschool programs.
6. Increase parent and provider satisfaction regarding the identification and referral process for children with disabilities.
7. Make available an online Transition to Kindergarten toolkit which would help families transition to Kindergarten.
8. Support the Pre-K to Grade 3 Leadership Program to ensure participants are able to demonstrate an understanding of the special considerations for curriculum, instruction and assessment for children pre-K to Grade 3 as measured by pre and post-assessments.

Family engagement efforts mentioned previously will help to meet many of the goals and objectives mentioned above to enhance the birth to third grade continuum in each PDG community. While most efforts originally described in the application were to begin in 2015, due to the state's fiscal year implementation of the PDG, as well as new staff overseeing these efforts and their need to first understand communities and build relationships, much of this work is set to occur in Year 2 of the PDG. Additionally, in order to eliminate programmatic silos within in the OEC, the agency recently merged its Early Intervention Division into its Family Support Division, effective February 1, 2016. These two divisions are critical to the work of supporting a continuum of early learning and

development. The merger of these two divisions will enable the OEC to fully integrate the services families and children rely on, while providing an opportunity for cross-training among the family support workforce. The newly designed Family Support Division will house two units --early intervention and home visiting.

Thus far, in Year 1, the Family Engagement Project Manager has helped to create 13 Family Engagement Teams. These teams have reviewed literature, quality family engagement frameworks and toolkits, promising strategies from the field and existing family engagement efforts to create plans to deepen family engagement in each community. Beginning in Year 2, the teams will be expanded to include colleagues from the broader birth-to-third-grade continuum, including private in-home child care providers. The expanded teams will review the status of the birth to third grade continuum in each community and determine how resources available through PDG can be best used to enhance the continuum.

As mentioned previously, the OEC is considering the use of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) to deepen family engagement and increase capacity for smooth transitions of children and families into PDG classrooms and subsequently into Kindergarten classrooms.

Additionally, the Family Support Division of the OEC will begin to work with MIECHV-funded and state-funded home-visiting contractors that use the Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Early Head Start evidence-based models, to retain children until preschool age (when appropriate) in order to better inform hard-to-reach or isolated parents about high-quality preschool options available to them. The OEC recognizes that home visitors establish long-term relationships with families in the three years preceding preschool enrollment, and would be in a good position to inform the families on their caseloads about the value and impact of high-quality preschool experiences.

The OEC also stated in its application that it would enter into an MOU with all Early Head Start programs serving the 13 Subgrantee communities to ensure that parents of enrolled children are well informed about high-quality preschool options available through state preschool programs and Head Start. The MOU would outline that parents are to be assisted in visiting Head Start Programs and state preschool programs to meet staff and other parents. Discussions with Early Head Start providers will begin soon as Family Engagement Teams begin to address the birth-to-third-grade continuum.

Additionally, through the work of the Family Engagement Teams, outreach can occur in partnership with home-visiting program contractors to assist parents of children in the 13 PDG communities to visit state preschool programs or Head Start as their children approach age three.

As previously mentioned, the OEC is working with Subgrantees to create MOUs with their local school district's early childhood special education coordinators to better establish the provision of services for children with disabilities. Through these MOUs, the OEC would also include the involvement of a child's preschool teacher in IEP meetings (at the request of the parent). The OEC will continue to explore ways in which it can work with its sister agency, the Connecticut Department of Education, to use data to determine the effectiveness of these agreements by parents, teachers, early learning providers and school districts. The rationale is that written agreements between the local state preschool programs and the local school district, in which all personnel are familiar, will contribute to a smoother process for families of children who require special education and related services.

The OEC is also proud to support the University of Connecticut's Pre-K to Grade 3 Leadership Program, which enrolled its first cohort of educators and child care administrators that will focus their time in the program to understand special considerations for curriculum, instruction and assessment for

children preschool to Grade 3. This program will be ongoing and results will be available after the first cohort has completed the session.

Once a home-visiting module is developed for the OEC's Early Childhood Information System, it will be able to track data on children residing in the 13 Subgrantee communities who are enrolled in MIECHV or state-funded home-visiting programs. Starting with the cohort of children born in 2016 (and each birth cohort thereafter), those enrolled in home-visiting programs prenatally or within 30 days of their birth, will be assigned a unique identifier. The OEC will then begin the process of collecting longitudinal data as they move across the continuum in home visiting programs (and/or IDEA Part C enrollment), as they enter into state preschool programs or Head Start (and/or IDEA Part B Section 619), as they move to Kindergarten (KEA data), and eventually, into third grade (test scores). The OEC will begin to analyze this data once this module of the state's Early Childhood Information System is implemented.

Lastly, the OEC, in collaboration with the State Department of Education Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services & Adult Education will develop an online toolkit on transition to Kindergarten. Working with stakeholders and local PDG Family Engagement Teams, the toolkit will be piloted in the 13 Subgrantee communities before being introduced statewide to all state preschool programs. The toolkit will be developed by staff from both agencies and posted on their websites, and will help families access resources that will help them transition their children to Kindergarten.

Together, and over the four years of the grant, the activities above will help the OEC and the state of Connecticut focus on supporting its youngest learners as they age zero-to-eight.

Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High Quality State Preschool Slots (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in using at least 50% of the State's federal grant award to create new State Preschool Program slots that will increase the overall number of new slots in State Preschool Programs that meet the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

Connecticut's ambitious and achievable plan, funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), was built on the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) existing state preschool infrastructure. PDG has allowed Connecticut to expand access to high-quality state preschool programs and improve the quality of existing State Preschool Programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 712 eligible preschoolers. In Year 1, 430 of its 712 total spaces were committed to expanding new preschool program spaces that met the definition of high-quality as defined by the grant.

As outlined in Connecticut's application, building on our existing state preschool infrastructure utilized existing School Readiness Councils to implement PDG at the local level. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness program.

At the close of Year 1, Connecticut was successfully partnering with 13 Councils to deliver high-quality preschool to 625 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 53 classrooms throughout the state. Of those eligible children, 55% were being served in expansion spaces and 45% in improved spaces. Of the \$9,392,150 in Year 1 committed to supporting expansion and improved spaces, \$6,794,000 (72%) is earmarked to create new expansion spaces which include both 6-hour, school-day, school year

programs as well as 10-hour day, full-year programs.

According to recent data compiled via PDG Interim Provider Reports, every PDG early learning provider is implementing almost all of the structural elements of high-quality defined in the grant, for both expansion and improved classrooms.

Throughout all sites, including those with expansion spaces, all high-staff qualifications are being met and every teacher in a PDG classroom has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or has attained the state's approved alternative Early Childhood Teaching Credential (ECTC).

While every PDG teacher has the approved credential, recent PDG Interim Provider reports have shown that not all instructional staff salaries are comparable to local K-12 instructional staff salaries. Through monitoring processes, the OEC has identified six PDG teachers who are not making the appropriate salary as defined by the grant. The OEC has reached out to the local School Readiness Liaison in each instance and early learning providers are being notified of their noncompliance. In most cases, the difference in salary is minimal and ranges from \$2,000-\$5,000. All programs will work to amend this issue to remain in compliance before the close of the current program year.

As described earlier in this report, while all programs fully support inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities, difficulties remain in the actual implementation of this structural element.

All PDG classrooms, including those with expansion space, are meeting several of the other high-quality structural elements defined in the grant including the state-funded mandate of a class size of no more than 18, as well as a child-to-staff ratio of no more than 9:1. Additionally, all PDG funded classrooms are in either school-day, school-year programs (6-hour days), or full-day, full-year programs (10-hour days). 239 expansion spaces are located in 10-hour day, full-year programs while the remaining 191 are housed in 6-hour, school-day programs.

Every PDG classroom is receiving high-quality professional development that focuses on four key areas: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social emotional development, Response to Intervention and Special Education Referral. This high-quality professional development, along with assessment of all PDG classrooms using CLASS ensures that developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments are present and aligned with the Connecticut ELDS. The high-quality professional learning model was designed specifically for the PDG and is delivered and evaluated based on adult learning theories and current research and practices. It tests a unique professional learning delivery model, supported by best practices and peer-reviewed literature on teacher effectiveness, that includes highly individualized coaching and consultation as the primary medium to influence knowledge, understanding and practices within a classroom as opposed to the 'cookie-cutter' large group trainings which are more commonly utilized. The design, delivery, and assessment of the high-quality professional learning are rooted in core competencies and delivered by approved facilitators and coaches that hold the competencies needed to address learning needs.

Each PDG program and classroom also participates in evidence-based health and safety standards as measured by either OEC's licensing division, NAEYC accreditation and/or ECERS assessments. Every PDG funded early learning provider must be NAEYC accredited, or attain accreditation within three years of being funded. Interim measures include an ECERS rating within the classroom at least once per year. 25 of 37 PDG funded programs are NAEYC accredited --of the 12 not accredited, 10 are programs with expansion spaces. These 12 programs will receive an ECERS rating by the end of the

program year (June 2016) and results will be monitored by both the OEC and local School Readiness Liaison.

All programs have also reported that they are implementing some form of individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning. The OEC will gather additional data to understand specifically how programs are defining and meeting this high-quality standard.

Each PDG program site has reported that on-site comprehensive services have been implemented and are accessible to all eligible children and their families. Almost every program reported that within 45-days the program ensures that every child receives a variety of screenings ranging from hearing and vision, the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment, and height and weight to ensure each child is within normal range according to research based standards. In many cases, PDG funds were able to introduce for the first time, or enhance these screenings within PDG classrooms.

Also available in many programs are enhanced opportunities to engage families. Many programs have used funds to host parent workshops and/or form parent advisory committees. Many PDG teachers and directors are also involved in the Subgrantee Family Engagement Teams convened by the state's Family Engagement Project Manager.

Another commonality across PDG programs is their participation in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide nutritious meals and snacks for children. Many programs also reported that PDG funds have allowed them to introduce or enhance this structural element by increasing a nutritionist position as well as launching various food and physical fitness activities for children and families. Many programs too have been able to hire additional case managers, social workers or family engagement outreach workers to provide referrals and linkages to families as well as coordinate onsite services such as SNAP.

Lastly, as mentioned previously in this APR, while all programs reported meeting the structural element of inclusion of children with disabilities, throughout our PDG communities more work must be done in order to provide the necessary special education and related services within the classroom in all PDG settings. To ensure this high-quality standard is met with rigor, looking ahead to Year 2, a priority of the OEC will be collaboration with school districts to deliver special education and related services integrated into the normal routines and activities of PDG classrooms. In most cases, school districts are receptive to this priority. In addition, planning in the spring allows for the lead time that was not provided in Year 1. Additionally, the OEC and Subgrantees, along with local special education coordinators have committed to finalizing MOUs which would clearly articulate how best to allocate resources and serve children with disabilities in all PDG classrooms, regardless of setting. Also, recognizing that establishing an IEP takes time, the OEC will begin to track not only the number of children with IEPs, but also the number of children who have been referred for further evaluation.

In total, 28 new classrooms with 430 expansion slots have been introduced in Connecticut for the first time because of the PDG. Included in each of these classrooms are the 12 high-quality structural elements defined in the grant that undoubtedly will have a marked effect on the future readiness and success of children when they enter Kindergarten.

Section B: Budget Information

Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

1. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

The figures reported in the APR Data Tables are based on the State Fiscal Year July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016. All figures are actuals-to-date as of December 31, 2015. At the close of the state fiscal year, the OEC will be better able to analyze and report any discrepancies between the state's approved budget and its total expenditures.

Preliminary analyses of spending-to-date show that minor adjustments have been made to the state's original spending plan and include adjustments made because of last-minute space changes requested by Subgrantees. In one community, a change was requested that did not change the number of spaces but rather the space type, which affected the amount distributed to that Subgrantee.

Additionally, the amount of match funds provided by the state may decrease minimally due to adjustments in the amount of state quality enhancement funds and state preschool funds, needed to support non-eligible children in PDG improved classrooms. Two Subgrantees notified the OEC of changes within improved classrooms that resulted in 34 less non-eligible children served in PDG classrooms, these changes will reduce the state's match through quality enhancement funds by \$110,559, and other state funds by just over \$200,000. Together, this reduction amounts to less than 1% of the state's total match dollars over the four-year grant period and will not affect the delivery of high-quality preschool programming to eligible children or the state's ability to meet the competitive preference priority match contribution outlined in its original grant.

The OEC requested and was approved carry-over funding from Year 1 in the amount of \$893,191. This carry over is a result of a change in the start date for some full year program classrooms from July, 2015 to September, 2015, as shown in the Scope of Work, with the intent to extend the PDG classrooms through July and August of the last year of the grant. This includes \$809,891 + 54,600 in carry-over. In addition, \$11,700 of the carry-over was the result of changes to the type of spaces allocated to a community which resulted in a decrease to their overall award.

The OEC is currently working to determine how these carry-over funds will be used. Uses for funds could include providing more spaces to Subgrantees who have expressed the capacity to fill them as well as increasing family engagement methods for each Subgrantee community. As of January 29, 2016, PDG providers have approximately 92 eligible children on their wait lists and some communities have the capacity to serve them with additional resources. The OEC will continue to investigate the best use of carry-over funds to meet the goals and objectives of the grant in Year and beyond.

Contractual expenses will be decreased in Year 1 due to payments outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed with the University of Connecticut (UCONN) to conduct the third-party evaluation for the PDG. Overall funding will not change over the four-year grant period and remain at \$800,000 however, the OEC has added a fifth year to the MOA to ensure data is captured on PDG children served in Year 4 when they enter Kindergarten (2019). To support the data collection efforts for children served in the last year of the grant as they enter Kindergarten, the OEC has worked to decrease Year 1 funds for evaluation (from \$385,569 to \$59,854) and increased funds in Years 2-4 (from \$414,431 to \$489,959). As of December 31, 2015, \$59,854 has been allocated for evaluative efforts.

According to the drawdown history provided, the OEC has drawn down \$4,413,389 as of December 31, 2015. As noted in the Budget Table in the APR Data Workbook, overall spending as of December 31 amounts to \$4,418,820.31 (38%) of overall funds budgeted in Year 1 (\$11,689,109). Remaining funds will be used to carry the PDG program through 2015-2016 school. State expenditures exceed drawdowns by \$5,431 as of December 31, 2015 however, when analyzing reports of both expenditures and drawdowns, it appears several year-end expenditures made in 2015 were captured

in January 2016 drawdowns.

Due to decreased need of total budgeted funds in Year 1 for the evaluation described above, as well as the fact that the program will continue through school year 2015-2016, the OEC is on target with spending its approved budget through June 30, 2016.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016).

As mentioned previously, minor adjustments will be made to the state's Year 2 budget period to compensate for changes made to a Memorandum of Agreement with UCONN, the state's third-party evaluator. The state is currently still implementing its first program year and will analyze all expenses at the close of the state Fiscal Year in order to determine changes that will be made to its overall budget.

As previously mentioned, the use of carry-over funds is currently being investigated and may be used to provide additional spaces to Subgrantees who have the capacity to serve more eligible children in Year 2. The OEC has formally requested information from all Subgrantees on their ability to increase the number of eligible children served in high-quality preschool spaces during the school year 2016-2017. The OEC is using this information to determine how carry-over funds, as well as any unspent funds realized at the end of the state fiscal year, may be used to support new or improved spaces in its existing Subgrantee communities.

While the OEC is currently planning for school year 2016-2017, news of recent changes to the PDG under the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has prompted planning of PDG implementation in Years 3 and 4. Currently, the OEC uses 95% of its grant award to support new or improved high-quality spaces for 712 eligible children in each year of the grant. If changes are made to the percentage of funds that can be subgranted, the OEC and its partners would have to completely overhaul budgets to meet its current goals, as per child costs to support or enhance quality would be dramatically changed. The OEC awaits further guidance on the implementation of the PDG through ESSA and the opportunity to work with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education to provide quality preschool experiences for eligible children.

3. Describe the State's progress on its plan for sustainability at the end of the grant period to ensure that the number and percentage of Eligible Children with access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded, including to additional High-Need Communities.

Connecticut is firmly committed to sustaining high-quality state preschool programs after the grant period ends. The OEC is currently investigating ways in which available state funding for state preschool programs can ensure that the 428 expansion and 284 improved spaces in the 13 Subgrantee communities continue.

In Connecticut's PDG application, the state was anticipating a statewide expansion of 3,000 spaces over the next three years (1,000 in each year) as well as the introduction of the Smart Start initiative.

Connecticut's Smart Start program began during school year 2015-2016 and provides funding for local school districts to serve three and four-year-olds with certified teachers in programs operated by local Boards of Education. The \$205 million Smart Start initiative, funded over a 10-year period has the potential to expand the state preschool program by another 2,000 slots. As of December 31, 2015 there are an additional 341 children served in Smart Start classrooms in 13 public school districts across CT.

The Smart Start initiative and the PDG were both included in the anticipated statewide expansion of

1,000 spaces in Fiscal Year 2016. Due to statewide budget deficits, it is unclear how spaces may be expanded moving forward. However, the governor's office is committed to supporting quality early childhood and has limited rescissions wherever possible in order to maintain the state's existing high-quality preschool programs.

The OEC will continue to work with Subgrantees through the grant period to discuss methods of sustainability to maintain or increase access to high-quality preschool programs and continue to serve eligible children after the grant period. The OEC is participating in various trainings, webinars and in-person meetings conducted by the state's PDG technical assistance provider, CELO, and will participate in an upcoming meeting on financing and sustaining high-quality preschool programs. The meeting will allow participants to gain a deeper understanding of how to develop a strategic financing plan, including planning for the data needed on the costs and resources available and innovative financing strategies to sustain access to high quality programs once federal funding ends.

Lastly, through the third-party evaluation being conducted by UCONN, the OEC hopes to better understand the true cost of providing high-quality preschool programs in different types of early care and education settings. Through the PDG, the OEC has proposed the following rates:

\$12,800 EXPANSION, new 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$18,200 EXPANSION, new 10 Hour-Day, Year-Round space

\$ 8,300 IMPROVED, improving an existing 2.5 Hour-Day to 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$ 6,800 IMPROVED, improving existing 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$ 9,530 IMPROVED, improving existing 10 Hour-Day, Year-Round space

Through the UCONN evaluation as well as continuous monitoring efforts, the OEC will analyze costs and expenditures by Subgrantees to determine whether proposed rates are sufficient in funding high-quality preschool programs and for the purposes of planning universal access for all high-need three and four year-olds in the state.

4. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies, if any, between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

The figures reported in the ARP Data Tables are based on the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015 and ending June 30, 2016. All figures are actuals-to-date as of December 31, 2015. At the close of the state fiscal year, the OEC will be better able to analyze and report any discrepancies between the state's approved budget and its total expenditures as well as that of Subrecipients.

Preliminary analyses of spending-to-date show that minor adjustments have been made to Subrecipient budgets, including adjustments in various line items including personnel, fringe, transportation and supplies. In a few instances, Subrecipients actually increased personnel line items from approved budgets because PDG teacher's hired had experience that would warrant a higher salary than that of the local K-12 starting teacher salary. Benefit line items have in most instances, remained constant, however some Subgrantees have increased or decreased this line item due to varying personnel benefits coverage or, in particular among public school sites, the district contributing to the cost of benefits for PDG teachers.

For one Subrecipient, transportation costs are being reduced by almost \$34,000 due to underutilization by eligible families. Initial estimates determined that many families would use the transportation provided at this site however, most families preferred to transport their own children which left an overage of funds in the Subrecipient's budget. The Liaison has notified the OEC of the overage and funds have been reallocated to another Subrecipient in the same community who determined the need, and had the capacity to, deliver transportation services. This reallocation will change both Subrecipient budgets.

In another community, one of the largest PDG Subrecipients was unable to serve children due to

delays in construction and various licensing and permit issues at the local level. The OEC was notified just before the start of the school year that construction efforts had been stalled and the site would not be ready for operation. Immediately, the OEC and local School Readiness Liaison, together with the Subrecipient, determined the scope of the issue and how best to support children and families in other PDG, state and Head Start programs until the program opened. Issues at the Subrecipient site were resolved in mid-December and children were enrolled immediately. This Subrecipient's budget has been changed to reflect the three months of closure when children were not being served in PDG classrooms. The OEC continues to work with the Subgrantee to determine how best to reallocate these funds to meet the goals and objectives of the grant.

Similarly, another Subrecipient budget has been changed as funds were not awarded due to low enrollment. The OEC has worked with the local School Readiness Liaison and Subrecipient to increase enrollment which has risen to 100% utilization however, the budget has been decreased for slots not filled during a three-month period.

According to the drawdown history provided, the OEC has drawn down \$4,413,389 as of December 31, 2015. As noted previously, in the Budget Table in the APR Data Workbook, overall spending as of December 31 amounts to \$4,418,820.31 (38%) of overall funds budgeted in Year 1 (\$11,689,109). Closer analyses of reports show \$4,174,479 has been distributed to Subgrantees and, by extension, Subrecipients. This figure is equal to spending projections made at the start of the state fiscal year, most notably because 35 of 37 PDG Subrecipients are operating on the 2015-2016 school year and did not start until September of 2015.

As noted previously, state expenditures exceed drawdowns by \$5,431. When analyzing reports of both expenditures and drawdowns, it appears several year-end expenditures made in 2015 were captured in January 2016 drawdowns.

None of the Subrecipient budget changes noted above will affect the state's ability to achieve approved project activities or objectives.