

Goal 3. Early Learning:

Improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through 3rd grade, so that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career-ready.

Goal Leader: Ann Whalen

Objective 3.1: Access to High-Quality Programs and Services. Increase access to high-quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs. **Objective Leader: Libby Doggett**

Metric 3.1.A: Number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high-quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs⁵⁴

Objective 3.2: Effective Workforce. Improve the quality and effectiveness of the early learning workforce so that early childhood educators have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to improve young children's health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes. **Objective Leader: Libby Doggett**

Metric 3.2.A: Number of states and territories with professional development systems that include core knowledge and competencies, career pathways, professional development capacity assessments, accessible professional development opportunities, and financial supports for child care providers⁵⁵

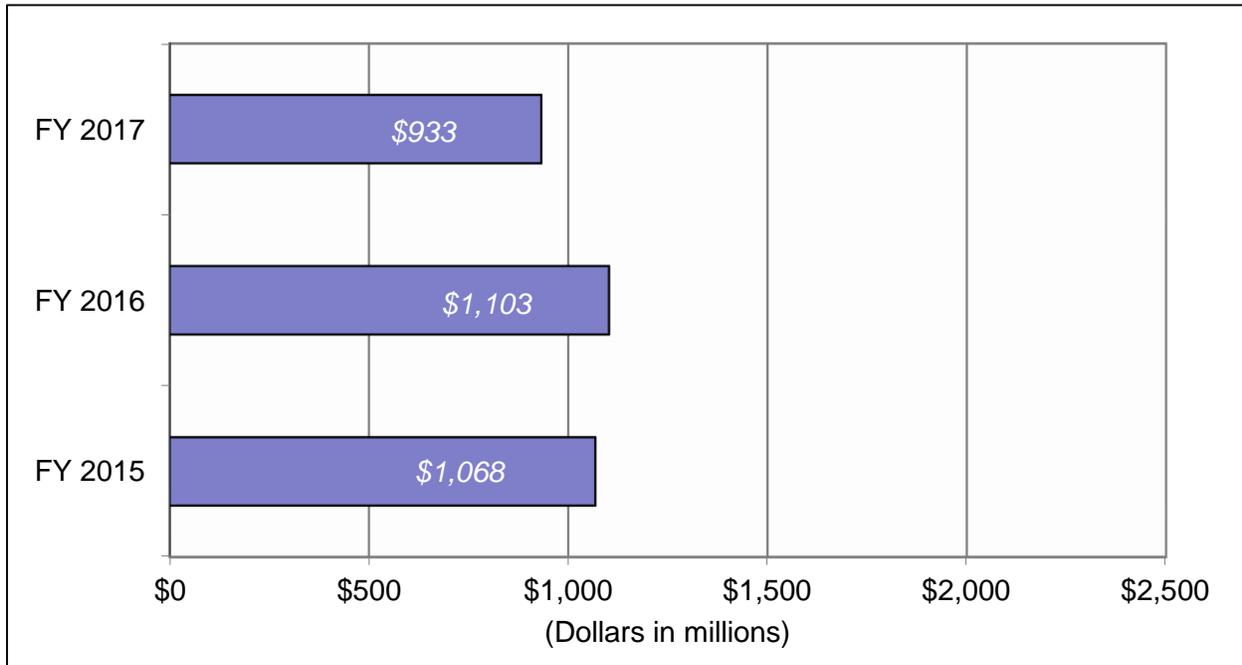
Objective 3.3: Measuring Progress, Outcomes, and Readiness. Improve the capacity of states and early learning programs to develop and implement comprehensive early learning assessment systems. **Objective Leader: Libby Doggett**

Metric 3.3.A: Number of states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure

⁵⁴ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

⁵⁵ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

Goal 3 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities⁵⁶ Supporting Goal 3 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
OESE	I&I	3.1	Preschool development grants	250	250	0 ⁵⁷
OSERS	SE	3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Grants for infants and families	439	459	504
OSERS	SE	3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Preschool grants	353	368	403
Subtotal				1,042	1,077	907
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				26	26	26
TOTAL, GOAL 3				1,068	1,103	933

POC = Principal Office Component

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Public Benefit

Each year, about 4 million children enter kindergarten in the United States. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. They speak many languages, come from diverse cultures, and have differing abilities, which may require individualized services and supports. Parents and caregivers send their children to school believing that one day their children will be able to pursue their dreams—whether that is teaching, protecting their communities as police officers, making scientific discoveries, or helping companies and organizations succeed. All parents hope their child will start school ready for success. And many parents turn that hope into action, seeking out supportive and high-quality early learning opportunities. Unfortunately, not every

⁵⁶ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

⁵⁷ Funds are included in the 2017 President's Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services.

parent finds those opportunities, and access to high-quality early learning opportunities differs across states and communities. There are large disparities in enrollment based on geography, race, and socioeconomic levels. As a result, too many children enter kindergarten a year or more behind their classmates in academic skills and socio-emotional development.⁵⁸ For some children, starting school already behind can trap them in a cycle of continuous catch-up in their learning. As a nation, we must ensure that all children, regardless of family circumstance, immigration status, the color of their skin, disability, or their zip code, have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Advances in education, developmental psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and economics have helped to demonstrate the benefits of quality early education for young children and that the years from birth to age five are a critical period in children's learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills.⁵⁹ For example, at kindergarten entry, children with bigger vocabularies at an early age have higher reading and mathematics achievement and fewer behavior challenges.⁶⁰ A robust body of research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not participate. The gains are particularly powerful for children from low-income families and those at risk for academic failure who, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in preliteracy and language skills.⁶¹

Studies also reveal that participating in quality early learning can boost children's educational attainment and earnings later in life.⁶² Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to utilize special education services or be retained in their grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended high-quality preschool programs.⁶³ Research also suggests that expanding early learning—including high-quality preschool—provides society with a return on investment of \$8.60 for every \$1 spent with half of this benefit from increased earnings and improved health outcomes for children when they grow up.⁶⁴

The Administration began efforts to increase investments in early learning in its first term and has continued to request additional funding in each subsequent budget proposal—through Head Start, child care, home visiting, IDEA Part C, ELC, and Preschool Development Grants. States and local communities have welcomed the opportunity to partner with the federal government through these early learning programs.

From 2011 to 2013, 20 (of the 40 states that applied for ELC) were awarded grants. These grantees had committed to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of early learning programs

⁵⁸ Yoshikawa, Hirokazu, Christine Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow. Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education. Vol. 9. Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development, 2013.

⁵⁹ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base for Preschool Education. Policy brief, Society for Research in Child Development and the Foundation for Child Development. Retrieved from the Foundation for Child Development website: fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence_Base_on_Preschool_Education_FINAL.pdf

⁶⁰ Maczuga, S., Morgan, P., Farkas, G., Hammer, C., Hillemeier, M., & Scheffner, C. 24-Month-Old Children With Larger Oral Vocabularies Display Greater Academic and Behavioral Functioning at Kindergarten Entry. *Child Development*, Volume 86, Issue 5, pages 1351–1370, September/October 2015.

⁶¹ Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. (2000). Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁶² See, e.g., Yoshikawa, et.al., Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education, 2013.

⁶³ Center for Public Education. (2008). The Research on Pre-K. Alexandria, VA.

⁶⁴ White House Council of Economic Advisors. The Economics of Early Childhood Investments, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report1.pdf

across multiple funding streams supporting children from birth through age 5 and serve as model early learning and development systems. By December 2014, nearly 14,000 early childhood programs are ranked in the highest quality tiers of the 20 ELC states' rating systems—a 63 percent increase since the states applied for their grants—with significantly more children enrolled in the highest quality-rated early learning programs than ever before.⁶⁵ National technical assistance is also available to help all states in building such systems.

In 2013, the President's Budget proposed a landmark investment to expand access to high-quality preschool, *Preschool for All*. The President's overarching vision has been captured in the bipartisan *Strong Start for America's Children Act* reintroduced in the 114th Congress. This legislation would fund voluntary, high-quality preschool for all four-year old children from families earning below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line in a state-federal partnership, and encourage states to spend their own funds to support preschool for young children with family incomes above that income level. The legislation would also expand Early Head Start-child care partnerships to help raise the quality of services for infants and toddlers and increase IDEA funding for young children with disabilities.

In addition, Strong Start includes authorization for [Preschool Development Grants](#), which were first funded by Congress in 2014. Last year 18 states (of the 36 that applied) were awarded grants to create or expand high-quality preschool programs for 4-year-olds in over 200 high-need communities. This program builds on the achievements of ELC by expanding access to preschool programs that include the following nationally recognized standards: high staff qualifications; professional development for teachers and staff; low staff-child ratios; small class sizes; full-day programs; developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments that are aligned with states' early learning standards; inclusive programs for children with disabilities; employee salaries that are comparable to those for K–12 teaching staff; ongoing program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; strong family engagement; and onsite comprehensive services for children.

Providing children, including children with disabilities and those who are ELs, with quality early education experiences is essential to strengthening our nation's economy. Significant new investments to expand access to high-quality early learning, improve the early childhood workforce, and support comprehensive assessment systems are necessary to help states, local communities, and parents close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. Only then can we ensure that all children graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life.

⁶⁵ At a Glance: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Year 2014 Progress Update <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/rtt-elic-2014-apr-progress.pdf>

Goal 3: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
3.1.A. Number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs ⁶⁶	SY: 2010 17	27	29 ⁶⁷	NA	32	NA ⁶⁸	/		NA	NA	
New APG Metric: Percent of 4-year olds enrolled in state preschool programs ⁶⁹	SY: 2013– 14 29.1%	NA	SY: 2013–14 29.1%	NA	NA	NA	/		33.0%	35.0%	/
New APG Metric: Number of states with high-quality preschool program standards ⁷⁰	SY: 2013– 14 15	NA	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	NA	NA	/		19	21	/
3.2.A. Number of states and territories with professional development systems that include core knowledge and competencies, career pathways, professional development capacity assessments, accessible professional development opportunities, and financial supports for child care providers ⁷¹	SY: 2011 30	30	Not Collected	NA	38	NA ⁷²	/		NA	NA	/

⁶⁶ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 35 and 37, respectively.

⁶⁷ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Met.”

⁶⁸ This is an HHS metric and out of the Department's control or influence. Please refer to footnote 66 for additional information.

⁶⁹ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁷⁰ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁷¹ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were both NA.

⁷² Please refer to footnote 68.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
New Metric: Number of states that require a teacher with a bachelor's degree in a state preschool program	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	NA	NA	/		19	20	/
3.3.A. Number of states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure	SY: 2010 2	3	5 ⁷³	11 ⁷⁴	9	MET			14	16 ⁷⁵	

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

3.1.A. Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Report of State Plans with annual updates from states and territories (HHS/Office of Childcare); annually

3.2.A. CCDF Report of State Plans (HHS/Office of Childcare); biennially

3.3.A. Race to the Top (RTT)-Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Technical Assistance Center; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

⁷³ Five ELC states implemented their KEA (OR, KY, VT, MD, and OH) in the 2014–15 school year. One state (DE) had planned to implement its KEA in 2014–15 year, but later adjusted its timeline to implement during the 2015–16 school year. As such, the FY14 actual is revised from six to five states.

⁷⁴ Eleven ELC states (CA, CO, DE, KY, MD, MA, MI, NC, OH, OR, and VT) are implementing their KEAs in the 2015–16 school year. The remaining eight states that chose to implement KEAs (GA, IL, MN, NJ, NM, PA, RI, WA) will begin after the 2015–16 school year. Wisconsin did not select to implement a KEA, but is implementing a statewide literacy assessment and is exploring the development and use of a KEA.

⁷⁵ There will be difficulty collecting ELC data in out-years because some grantees will no longer be reporting APR data.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 3.1: Access to High-Quality Programs and Services

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

While states and the federal government both invest in early learning, these efforts have fallen short of what is needed to ensure that all children can access a high-quality early education that will prepare them for success. Across the nation, 58 percent of 4-year-olds and 85 percent of 3-year-olds are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs through state preschool, Head Start, and preschool special education services.⁷⁶ Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs.⁷⁷ Overall, during 2011–13, 4.4 million 3- and 4-year-olds were not attending any preschool at all, representing more than half (54 percent) of all children in that age group.⁷⁸

Children’s access to preschool also varies significantly by family income level and geographic region.⁷⁹ As of the 2013–14 school year, 41 states and the District of Columbia offered voluntary, state preschool programs for some children.⁸⁰ In 2015–16, three states (Indiana, New Hampshire, and North Dakota) had small pilot programs. Hawaii now has a program reaching public school students and their Preschool Development Grant will serve children in the public charter school system. Montana’s Preschool Development Grant has provided that state’s first state preschool program, which by 2018 will provide high-quality preschool to over 5,000 children from low-income families in sixteen communities, eight of which are on Indian lands.

Twenty-nine percent of America’s 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program in the 2013–14 school year. While total enrollment for 4-year-olds increased by 8,535, nearly half this increase was required to recoup the loss of 4,000 seats in 2012–13. At the May release of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Yearbook, Secretary Duncan noted, “The current pace of change is far too incremental...We have to think about transformational change.” In fact, as NIEER researchers observed, “at the 2013–2014 growth rate it would take about 75 years for states to reach 50 percent enrollment at age 4 and 150 years to reach 70 percent enrollment.”

While states enroll a total of 1.35 million 3- and 4-year-olds in state preschool, enrollment in individual state programs significantly varies.⁸¹ For example, Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, and the District of Columbia served more than 70 percent of their 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool, whereas 11 states with programs served fewer than 10 percent of 4-year-olds. These states are: Alabama; Alaska; Arizona; Delaware; Minnesota; Missouri; Nevada; Ohio; Oregon;

⁷⁶ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁷⁷ Nores, M., & Barnett, W.S. (2014). *Access to High Quality Early Care and Education: Readiness and Opportunity Gaps in America (CEELO Policy Report)*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

⁷⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *KIDS COUNT data center*. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

⁷⁹ Cascio, E.U., Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. *Expanding Preschool Access for Disadvantaged Children* http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/expand_preschool_access_cascio_schanzenbach.pdf

⁸⁰ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁸¹ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Rhode Island; and Washington. Local Head Start programs serve another approximately half million 4-year-olds from the lowest-income families.⁸²

While Latinos are the fastest growing and largest minority group in the United States, making up a quarter of 3- and 4-year-olds, Latinos demonstrate the lowest preschool participation rates of any major ethnicity or race with 63 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds not in any preschool programs.⁸³ The rates were also low for American Indians (59 percent). More than half of African-American and non-Hispanic white 3- and 4-year-olds were not in any preschool programs, which was nearly the same for Asian and Pacific Islander children (48 percent). While most children who have access to preschool attend moderate-quality programs, African American children and children from low-income families are the most likely to attend low-quality preschool programs and the least likely to attend high-quality preschool programs.⁸⁴ About one-third of children served by state preschool programs live in the two states with the lowest quality standards from the NIEER—Florida and Texas.⁸⁵ Forty percent of preschoolers—more than half a million—attend programs that meet few of the quality NIEER benchmark standards.

Children with disabilities also have difficulty accessing inclusive preschool programs. In 2013, across all states, 55.6 percent of preschool children served under Part B, section 619 of IDEA participated in at least 10 hours of a general early childhood program. Fewer than half (43.5 percent) of preschool children with disabilities received special education services in their general early childhood programs.⁸⁶

In coordination with the [Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center](#) (ELC TA) and [Preschool Development Grants Technical Assistance Center](#) (PDG TA), the Department, in coordination with HHS, is supporting efforts to expand access to high-quality early learning programs for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states, as well as nongrant states, through online early learning communities, technical assistance webinars, briefs, and reports. Additionally, OESE's national comprehensive center, the [Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes](#) (CEELO) and OSEP technical assistance (TA) centers provide support for all states, including around issues of access and quality.

A critical driver of quality in all early learning and development programs has been the states' QRIS (or Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS) for ELC states). This reform metric helps states set progressively higher program standards and provides supports to programs so they can meet those higher standards. Once programs are enrolled in a state's TQRIS, the state helps them improve their quality and their ranking. States provide technical assistance, professional development opportunities, and program improvement grants that allow programs to make the necessary quality improvements. Nearly half of all children who live in low-income families in the United States reside in the 20 ELC states. ELC states have increased the number of early learning and development programs participating in their TQRIS and are implementing strategies to improve the quality of those programs. The 20 ELC states' cumulative state data show that the number of early childhood programs included in the states'

⁸² Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2014. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/docs/hs-program-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

⁸³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). KIDS COUNT data center. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

⁸⁴ Center for American Progress. Why We Need a Federal Preschool Investment in 6 Charts. December 9, 2014. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2014/12/09/102737/why-we-need-a-federal-preschool-investment-in-6-charts/>

⁸⁵ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁸⁶ 2013 Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Data File. Accessed on 4/17/15 at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html>

TQRIS has nearly doubled from 38,642 at the start of their grants to 72,281 programs in 2014, an increase of 87 percent.

The 20 ELC states also reported on the number of children in various types of early learning and development programs that are in top tiers of their state's TQRIS in 2014. The report shows a 176 percent increase in the number of children with high needs enrolled in state preschool programs in the top tiers of their state's TQRIS from the time the states received their grants. More than 200,000 children are now enrolled in these programs, an increase of more than 127,000 children. As a result of the ELC program, there is a 75 percent increase in the number of children enrolled in high-quality programs supported through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF or child care subsidy). 228,760 children with high needs are now enrolled in CCDF-funded programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of almost 100,000 children. 151,676 children with high needs are now enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of more than 78,000 children.

In his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama called upon Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool for every child in America, proposing investments that would support a continuum of early learning opportunity from birth through kindergarten entry. He challenged more Americans—elected officials, business leaders, philanthropists, and the public—to help more children access the early education they need to succeed in school and in life. On December 10, 2014, the President convened state and local policymakers, mayors, school superintendents, corporate and community leaders, and advocates for the White House Summit on Early Education, highlighting collective leadership in support of early education for America's children. Leaders shared best practices in building the public-private partnerships that are expanding early education in communities across the country. Participants discussed effective strategies and programs that support and bring high-quality early childhood education to scale.

Leading private and philanthropic organizations made commits to new actions to spur greater access to high-quality early learning programs. Together with federal awards, this amounts to a collective investment of over \$1 billion in the education and development of America's youngest learners. It includes:

- Over \$340 million in new actions from corporate and philanthropic leaders to expand the reach and enhance the quality of early education for thousands of additional children.
- Up to \$750 million in new federal grant awards announced by Secretaries Duncan and Burwell, to support early learning for over 63,000 additional children across the country for Preschool Development Grants and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.
- The launch of [Invest in US](#), a new initiative created by the First Five Years Fund, a bipartisan nonprofit organization, in partnership with private philanthropic leaders, in response to the President's call to action.
- New private and philanthropic resources and support for Early Learning Communities, an initiative of Invest in US. Invest in US is working to connect communities and states interested in expanding early learning programs and opportunities with 10 leading partners that have committed to helping connect leaders with resources, planning grants, technical assistance, and other support for their youngest learners.

Since the Summit, significant progress has been made, and bipartisan cooperation has led to a substantial increase in public-private investments in early education.

Congress took an important step in 2014 to address inequities in access to high-quality preschool by supporting the Preschool Development Grants program, a 4-year, federal-state partnership to expand the number of children enrolled in high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities. There was significant bipartisan interest from state governors in this program. Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico applied and the Department made grants to 18 states. During the 2015–16 school year, these states are serving approximately 33,000 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families in more than 200 communities in high-quality preschool programs. The diversity of the 18 states that received grants reflects the fact that increasing access to preschool is a bipartisan priority across the country. From Massachusetts and Montana to Alabama and Hawaii, Preschool Development Grants are designed to help states move forward with high-quality preschool, whether that means expanding an already successful preschool program or helping to build state-level capacity and put in place quality improvements to serve more children in high-quality settings.

While the Preschool Development Grants will not reach every child in the funded states and there remains a huge unmet need, these states will be another step closer to the goal of expanding access to high-quality early learning across the country. Over the 4-year grant period, and with continued funding from Congress, these states are expecting to enroll an additional 177,000 children in high-quality preschool programs, which will help put children on a path to success in school and in life. About 285,000 preschoolers could have been served in the 18 states that did not receive a Preschool Development Grant. For four years, the Obama administration has requested formula funding to address the enormous unmet need for high-quality preschool and provide preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- to moderate-income families. In addition, the Administration's FY 2017 budget request includes funding for continuation grants to support current states, as well as additional dollars to expand Preschool Development Grants to more states, the Bureau of Indian Education, tribal educational agencies, territories, and the Outlying Areas.

The Department is also engaging in specific activities to ensure that infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families have access to high-quality programs and services. OSEP began implementing an [RDA](#) system to hold states accountable for both improving results for children with disabilities and complying with requirements in IDEA. As part of RDA, states are being asked to develop a SSIP to focus and drive their efforts to improve results for children with disabilities. Phase 1 of the SSIP was submitted to OSEP in April 2015. States were required to submit SSIPs for both Part B and C of IDEA. The SSIPs included a measurable child result that states will be working to achieve over the next 5 years, and the infrastructure that they will need to have in place to support local programs in delivering high-quality services to meet the state-identified child result. Another component of RDA is ensuring that determinations reflect state performance on results, as well as compliance. OSEP must annually determine if a state “Meets Requirements,” “Needs Assistance,” or “Needs Intervention.” In July 2015, OSEP used child outcome data for the first time in making determinations for Part C programs.

In addition to accountability activities, OSEP is supporting states through technical assistance. Three of OSEP's national centers specifically focus on supporting states in enhancing their Part C and Part B, section 619 programs, as well as other early learning programs, to increase the quality of services provided to children with disabilities and their families. These centers are working with Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to develop effective and efficient infrastructures, including data and personnel systems, to deliver high-quality services to infants, toddlers, and preschool age children with disabilities and their families. The centers have developed a systems framework that states can use to assess their infrastructure and work

towards improving it. In addition, the centers are working with the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) to promote the use of the recently released DEC Recommended Practices, which provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities.

The Department and HHS released two major early childhood policy statements. [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Childhood Settings](#) was released December 10, 2014. The statement has influenced local and state efforts to assist states and their public and private local early childhood programs in preventing and severely limiting expulsions and suspensions in early learning settings. A second policy statement, [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#), released on September 14, 2015, supports the goal that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. In addition, the Department and HHS, in partnership with Too Small to Fail, have created the [Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day](#) tip sheets. Made specifically for families, caregivers and early educators, these resources can help enrich a child's early language experiences by providing research-based tips for talking, reading, and singing with young children every day beginning from birth. The Departments are also collecting public input on policy statements around family engagement in early learning settings and health and wellness promotion in early childhood settings. Each of these efforts contributes to the goal of improving the quality of early learning programs.

In October 2015, the Departments held a three-day annual grantee meeting for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states. In addition, nongrant states were invited to attend. In all, over 300 persons participated, and over 35 states were represented. Sessions focused on meeting the needs of states around improving quality in programs, measuring child outcomes, and supporting birth to third grade systems and other reforms.

Metrics in Goal 3 are influenced most by actions taken by states or grantees in response to state and federal policy initiatives, but they are also influenced by factors that are beyond the control of states, LEAs, or the Department of Education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Expanding access to high-quality preschool is critically important to ensuring that every child in America has the opportunity for lifelong success. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), reauthorizing the ESEA. ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grants program designed to improve coordination of early childhood programs and expand access to high-quality preschool. It is not certain how many additional children will have access to high-quality preschool under the new program. Also in December 2015, President Obama signed the FY 2016 spending bill, which provides funding for year 3 of the Preschool Development Grants. The Departments will be working to secure funding for the fourth and final year of the current Preschool Development Grants program in FY 2017. Pulling these funds away from states and communities would jeopardize their plans to serve over 50,000 children in high-quality preschool programs during the last year of the grants.⁸⁷

The President has made it a priority to expand educational opportunity for our nation's children, starting with our youngest learners, and has put forward a vision that would support the healthy

⁸⁷ This estimate assumes that the elimination of Preschool Development Grants in 2016 would prevent states from serving the additional children proposed in their applications for the final two years of the grant.

development and growth of children from birth to kindergarten entry. The President's FY 2017 Budget builds on the good work underway in states and local communities, and calls for expanding support to additional grantees to improve program alignment and coordination and to expand access to services. Preschool Development Grants are a critical step toward voluntary, universal access to high-quality early learning that gives all children a strong start in school and life.

ELC states face many challenges in developing a rating and monitoring process for their TQRIS. Providers must be informed about the process, so as to make them more likely to participate. The observation and rating tool must be a true measure of different levels of quality; it must give the same rating results in many different settings, and it has to be easy to use. Validating the effectiveness of a TQRIS ensures that it is measuring and assessing program quality in ways that make sense to state policy makers, early learning and education programs, and families with young children. Both the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services are providing support so ELC states have the knowledge and best research for improving their TQRIS. This technical assistance is provided directly to the states in addition to peer learning groups on various topics of interest such as best ways to validate a TQRIS system or to ensure families understand the difference in the quality tiers. The Departments are helping ELC states to validate their systems, ensure consistency in the reporting of TQRIS ratings, and develop data system linkages between their TQRIS and other systems with data on young children and the early childhood workforce. As states begin to report on evaluations of their TQRIS, there must be a recognition that the systems are still not mature and may not yet reflect their true impact. OSEP-funded technical assistance also supports states in thinking about how to intentionally include children with disabilities across all levels of the TQRIS system, as some states only have optional indicators for children with disabilities, only include children with disabilities at some levels of the TQRIS, or do not intentionally include children with disabilities. Additionally, IES is also doing a study of the TQRIS systems and plans to make results available in 2016.

The Department committed \$5 million in Preschool Development Grants national activities funds to add to a multiyear investment by IES funding to expand the work of the network to support the work of the Preschool Development Grants states and other states advancing preschool and addressing the need for a new quality assessment tool. The Early Learning Network will comprise five Research Teams that will conduct in-depth, exploratory research in states, regions, cities, or school districts that are providing preschool opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each Research Team will conduct three complementary, prospective studies: (1) a descriptive study of systems-level policies and practices that support early learning; (2) a classroom observation study to identify teaching practices and other classroom-level malleable factors associated with children's school readiness and achievement in preschool and early elementary school; and (3) a longitudinal study to identify malleable factors associated with early learning and school achievement over time from preschool through the early elementary school grades (e.g., kindergarten through third grade). The Research Teams will also provide support to the Early Learning Assessment Team in piloting and validating a classroom observation tool that is designed for practitioners to use.

Funding continues to be a challenge for IDEA programs. Part C programs in particular are stretched thin as data shows that the number of children receiving services under Part C over the years has been steadily increasing. However, federal funding for Part C has not increased at the same rate so there has been a decrease in federal per-child funding for Part C services. To address fiscal challenges, some states have narrowed or restricted eligibility criteria, implemented or increased family fees for services, and reduced provider reimbursements. All of

these can reduce access to services for infants and toddlers who could benefit from them. OSEP-funded TA centers will provide TA to states on building their state infrastructure, which includes their financial system, to support states in using their funding as efficiently as possible. Additionally, OSEP-funded TA centers will continue to work with states to enhance the quality of services that they provide under IDEA Parts C and B, section 619.

Objective 3.2: Effective Workforce

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Securing a well-trained and properly supported early learning workforce is an essential element of high-quality early learning programs. Significant headway has been made in describing and conceptualizing what teachers do in the classroom that results in learning, which is a critical first step in getting teachers into those positions.

On April 1, 2015, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) released *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, which was commissioned by both the Departments of Education and HHS and four philanthropic foundations. The study explores the science of child development, particularly looking at implications for the professionals who work with children birth through age 8. The committee found that much is known about how children learn and develop, as well as the qualifications of the early childhood workforce and the supports they need. However, this knowledge is not fully reflected in the current capacities and practices of the workforce, the settings in which they work, and the qualifications and professional learning that is most effective.

The IOM/NRC Study outlines a blueprint for action based on 13 recommendations for local, state, and national governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic funders, and the business sector to support improvements to the quality of professional practice for early learning professionals who work with children from birth through age 8 and the environments in which they work. The study makes recommendations on improving the quality of the early learning workforce, including higher levels of education such as a bachelor's degree for lead educators, qualifications based more strongly on competencies and knowledge, and the use of evidence-based practices and strategies. Additionally, the study recommends fair compensation to recognize the professionalization of the workforce, as well as other improved supports for educators in their work environments. In the months following the release, additional communication materials were developed and distributed to the field through conferences, webinars, meetings, and in-service trainings.

ELC states are creating quality professional development systems to improve the skills of current and aspiring early learning teachers, directors, and assistant teachers. Fourteen ELC states are specifically working to provide and expand access to professional development opportunities that are aligned with their Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and that tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring (CO, DE, GA, KY, MD, MN, NJ, NM, OH, OR, PA, RI, WA, and WI). These states are also using incentives, such as scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives and strategies to promote professional improvement and career advancement. These other strategies include management opportunities, and they promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is based on the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Fifteen ELC states are working to support educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities (CA, CO, DE, GA, IL, MD, MA, MI, MN, NM, NC, OR, PA, RI, VT).

The Preschool Development Grants program sets a high bar for workforce quality in the 18 grantee states. High-quality preschool programs require, for example, 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 alternate 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. In addition, instructional staff salaries are required to be comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff, and programs must provide high-quality professional development for all staff.

Four states (Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, and Oregon) are finishing up working with the OSEP-funded [Early Childhood Personnel Center \(ECPC\)](#). This work centered on enhancing the personnel system within the states to ensure that personnel have the knowledge and skills to provide services to young children with disabilities and their families. These states developed and are implementing a plan to align their personnel standards with national professional organization personnel standards; develop partnerships with universities and community colleges to ensure that their curriculum is aligned to state personnel standards and to support better alignment between pre-service preparation and in-service professional development; and implement evidence-based practices within in-service professional development. ECPC is in the process of selecting four more states to work with over the next two years. In addition to providing intensive TA with states, ECPC held Leadership Institutes for 20 states. These Leadership Institutes provides strategies for Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators and leaders within early childhood agencies to work together to develop the workforce so that they have the competencies to serve young children with disabilities and their families. Additionally, ECPC has facilitated national professional organizations coming together to identify a set of competencies that personnel need to serve young children with disabilities. Those organizations include including DEC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the American Occupational Therapy Association, and the American Physical Therapy Association. Through this work, DEC and NAEYC are in the process of developing an agreement to align their personnel standards. During the fiscal year OSEP, also funded 7 new awards to universities to prepare personnel to work in early intervention and early childhood special education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed ESSA, reauthorizing the ESEA. ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grants program designed to improve coordination of early childhood programs and expand access to high-quality preschool, which may positively affect the early childhood workforce with expanded opportunities for professional development and improved conditions. ESSA also includes language explicitly stating that Title II dollars can be used for early childhood educators. Also in December 2015, President Obama signed the FY 2016 spending bill, which provides funding for year 3 of the Preschool Development Grants. The Departments will be working to secure funding for the fourth and final year of the current Preschool Development Grants program in FY 2017.

There are challenges in developing an effective early learning workforce. States have hiring challenges, due in part to a lack of available well-trained and effective personnel across multiple disciplines. Some states have experienced high turnover of early childhood educators and consultants due to low wages, attractive offers in other states, challenging financial times, and program management. States that can sustain programs for longer periods have less difficulty recruiting and retaining strong early childhood educators.

The Department and its technical assistance providers are working to address some of these challenges through webinars, peer learning, and pointing out promising practices, such as mentoring and coaching. For example, a study examining career pathways to be released in FY 2016 will provide states with an overview of how these systems are working in a handful of leading states. Reducing duplication of efforts and promoting promising practices is necessary for creating an early learning workforce that can deliver on the promise of these programs. ECPC is currently working with Part C and Part B, Section 619 coordinators to identify additional states with which to work to improve their personnel systems. A challenge that Part C and Part B, section 619 personnel experience is that they are often not included within workforce initiatives within states. To address this, ECPC will continue to hold Leadership Institutes as a way to provide Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators strategies to engage and become decision makers in workforce initiatives within their states.

Building on the positive reception from the release of the *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, the Departments are developing a plan to fund additional activities addressing the implementation of the recommendations, including funding a study on financing of preschool and convening with IHEs. The study will examine how to fund early care and education for 3- and 4-year-old preschool children that is accessible, affordable to families, and of high quality, including a well-qualified and adequately supported workforce consistent with the vision outlined in the Study. Over the course of 20 months, an ad hoc committee will review and synthesize the available research and analysis on the resources needed to meet the true costs of high-quality early care and education, including resources for improving the quality, affordability and accessibility of higher education; improving the quality and availability of professional learning during ongoing practice; and supporting well-qualified educators and administrators with adequate compensation through complete wage and benefit packages that are comparable across ages and settings.

The committee will gather information and review the available evidence on funding mechanisms that are currently being employed successfully on a large scale as well as illustrative examples of funding strategies that are being employed on a smaller scale but have promise for expansion. The committee will also take into consideration lessons that can be drawn from financing of early care and education in other countries and from workforce development in sectors other than education. The committee will produce a report that synthesizes the information gathered and, based on their analysis and interpretation, draws conclusions about and makes recommendations for concrete, implementable funding strategies in the public and private sectors at the national, state, and local levels.

Objective 3.3: Measuring Progress, Outcomes, and Readiness

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has determined that performance toward this objective is making noteworthy progress. As part of ELC, 11 states chose to use funds to address the use of comprehensive assessment systems, though all ELC states include comprehensive assessments as part of their program standards on which their TQRIS is based. These states are doing the difficult work of creating coordinated and comprehensive assessment systems that organize information to help early childhood educators, families, program directors, administrators, and policymakers to make informed instructional and programmatic decisions. A comprehensive assessment system coordinates the various types of valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments that children are likely to receive throughout their early learning years, such as screenings for possible developmental delays, assessments of ongoing developmental progress, diagnostic

assessments, and measures that examine children’s accomplishments on developmentally appropriate standards-based benchmarks. As they create these comprehensive systems, states are updating and selecting screening and assessment tools that are valid and appropriate for the populations being served; educating users about the purposes of each assessment; coordinating assessments to avoid duplication; training early childhood educators to administer, interpret, and use the results of assessments; and involving parents in decisions regarding learning and development strategies for their children.

In addition, 19 ELC states are or will be using KEAs that cover all the essential domains of school readiness and are aligned with their states’ early learning and development standards. Wisconsin did not elect to direct ELC funds toward the development of a comprehensive KEA, though they are funding an exploratory study. As part of a KEA, information is collected through observations, one-on-one discussions, small group activities, and through the use of technology. Results help early childhood educators better understand the status of children’s learning and development when they enter kindergarten so the educators can individualize instruction. Educators can share information with parents so that they can make informed decisions about their children’s education. Educators are using findings from the KEA to inform to inform instruction and help close the readiness gap at kindergarten and in the early elementary school grades.

The Department surpassed the 2015 performance target of 9 states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure. Eleven ELC states (CA, CO, DE, KY, MD, MA, MI, NC, OH, OR, and VT) are implementing their KEAs in the 2015–16 school year. The remaining eight states that chose to implement KEAs (GA, IL, MN, NJ, NM, PA, RI, WA) will begin after the 2015–16 school year. The 18 Preschool Development Grants states are required to report on the school readiness of the children participating in their high-quality preschool programs, with strong encouragement to use a KEA. We expect to have this data in spring 2017 for the second year of the grant.

On April 7, 2015, ELC TA cohosted a webinar with CEELO and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) focusing on the essential elements of a comprehensive assessment system, promising implementation strategies, key capacity-building considerations, and tools that can support this work at the state level. On June 6, 2015, ELC TA held the National Working Meeting on Early Learning Assessment in New Orleans, Louisiana. The one-day working meeting provided states with the opportunity to work together to address persistent problems associated with the implementation of comprehensive early learning assessment systems with a specific focus on child assessments, including KEAs. In August, 2015 ELC TA released a brief, statewide KEA Data Collection and Reporting in ELC states, in response to a request from a ELC state for information about issues that need to be considered in planning and implementing a statewide KEA data collection and reporting system. The report includes information on practices in five ELC states (Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Washington).

On August 27, 2015, the Department posted [EDFacts Data Set: Kindergarten Entry Assessment Data Collection through EDFacts Metadata and Process System \(EMAPS\)](#) as part of the *Annual Mandatory Collection of Elementary and Secondary Education Data through EDFacts* to explain the data that will be collected through EMAPS for KEAs in the School Year (SY) 2016–17, SY 2017–18, and SY 2018–19 EDFacts package. The team will address public comments received, post responses for 30 days, and then post a final regulation.

In FY 2013, the Department made [EAG](#) awards to support the development and enhancement of KEAs. Texas and two state consortia, one led by Maryland and the other led by North

Carolina, were awarded EAG grants. KEAs under this program should be aligned with state early learning standards and cover all essential domains of school readiness. Three additional ELC grantees are participating in the Maryland consortium (Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ohio) as well as a number of non-ELC states. Eight states are partnering with North Carolina: Delaware, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Washington, DC. Together the ELC and EAG programs support 29 states in creating incentives for states to implement KEAs.

On an annual basis through their APRs, OSEP continues to require state Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to report on child outcomes for children that received at least 6 months of IDEA services. OSEP funds a technical assistance center to support states in collecting high-quality data within their outcomes measurement system and in using that data for program improvement.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Assessment in early learning is in its infancy. Many states are starting from scratch developing valid and reliable measures for KEAs. As a result, constructing and testing these instruments and implementing them across every school in the state will be challenging and will take time. In addition, states will need to ensure that the KEAs are implemented in a balanced way that does not result in the loss of a significant amount of instructional time. Additionally, two of the three EAG grantees that are consortia may experience challenges coordinating across states due to differences in their policies and procedures. Preschool Development Grants states are required to report on the status of children in kindergarten served by the grants in the high-need communities, but they are not required to use a KEA, and funding may be a challenge at the federal, state and local levels. The Departments are working with these grantees to minimize these coordination challenges.

The Departments of Education and HHS will continue to reach out to CEELo, Education Commission on the States, CCSSO, NIEER, and other organizations that share our interest in advancing quality KEAs, share resources, and develop strategies that might increase our collective impact. The Departments are using national activities funds to develop case studies of four states' approaches to KEAs through the Department of Education's Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy. The objectives of this study are to document the processes, accomplishments, challenges, and solutions of four states (Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington) implementing KEAs and to share what they have learned with federal and state policymakers and the field. Of particular interest was identifying what is working well and what lessons have been learned in these states that were early adopters of KEAs. Data collection occurred between January and June 2015 in the four case study states, 12 districts, and 23 schools in the study. The final report is expected in July 2016. CEELo and ELC TA will continue to monitor state progress in development and implementation of KEAs and highlight best practices through webinars and meetings.

This year OSEP used Part C child outcomes data in making annual determinations of performance based on state performance plans and annual performance reports. OSEP-funded TA centers will continue to work with states to support them collecting high-quality child outcomes data that is reliable and valid, and using this data for program improvement efforts.

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 3

The Department is using a multipronged approach to improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through 3rd grade, so that all children, particularly

those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career-ready. Through technical assistance by Department staff and contractors, technical assistance centers, monitoring, research networks and reports, grantee meetings, and use of social media and the bully pulpit, the Department expects to reach its goal. One tool that supports the Departments in the management of this goal is an electronic monitoring and reporting tool that it uses to assess the progress in all ELC and Preschool Development Grants states and deploy specialized technical assistance as quickly as possible to ensure progress continues. Further, the Departments work with the ELC TA, PDG TA, CEELO, and OSEP-funded TA centers to provide targeted technical assistance, establish learning communities and provide webinars, briefs, and reports on key topics. The Departments' annual grantee meeting allows us to highlight key promising practices, discuss major challenges, and better understand state and local challenges. OSEP will be reviewing states' Phase II SSIPs for Part C in April 2016 and will be supporting them through technical assistance to develop plans that have improvement strategies to build or enhance their infrastructure, collect and use high-quality data, and improve services to enhance results for young children with disabilities and their families.

The Department of Education's efforts are aimed at increasing access to high-quality, effective programs—served by an effective early learning workforce—for children from birth to school entry and beyond (including children with disabilities and those who are ELs). Comprehensive assessment systems will measure our success, helping us to enhance the quality of all early learning programs, and reach the ultimate goal of improving children's outcomes.