

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

2015 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Alabama





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 #: S419A150014 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: _____

3. Project Title: 84.419A

4. Grantee Name: formerly AL Department of Children's Affairs (now AL Department of Early Childhood Education by State)

5. Grantee Address: _____

City: _____ State: Alabama Zip: _____

6. Project Director Name: Jeana Ross

Title: Secretary of Early Childhood Education

Phone #: 334-353-2700 Ext.: _____ Fax #: _____

Email Address: jeana.ross@ece.alabama.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	\$17,500,000.00	\$38,462,050.00
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: 10/01/2013 To: 09/30/2015
- Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: HHS
- 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: AL

PR/Award #: S419A150014

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.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) is housed within the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) and charged with administering Alabama's state and federally funded Pre-K program. OSR funds First Class Pre-K classrooms through a competitive grant process and administers the program in a variety of settings including: public schools, private childcare and schools, Head Start programs, community-based programs, faith-based programs, and military programs. OSR was created by the Alabama legislature during the 2000 legislative session. In the first year of operation, OSR funded eight pilot Pre-K programs. In 2013-2014, Alabama met its goal of having at least one pre-K classroom in each of its 67 counties. First Class Pre-K is a voluntary program and all state residents meeting the age criteria are automatically eligible. Currently, OSR funds over 600 Pre-K classrooms and supports the professional development of a high quality workforce through education, training, and on-site coaching and monitoring.

The efforts of many organizations support the success of Alabama First Class Pre-K. OSR works collaboratively with other local, state, and federal organizations to provide sustained support for each site. Cross-sector services include partnerships with the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Alabama State Department of Education, LEAs, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, Alabama Power Company, and the Alabama Partnership for Children. Each of these organizations offers assistance to our Alabama First Class Pre-K sites, enabling OSR to provide comprehensive services including health, vision, and physical screenings as well as assistance for children and families in need of additional school support including special education services for students with disabilities or developmental delays and for English language learners.

With strong support from the Alabama Governor, consistent funding from the State Legislature, and the receipt of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), First Class Pre-K has realized significant growth in access to high-quality Pre-K programs since the beginning of the program. As Alabama has expanded access to preschool programs, the state has maintained high-quality at the center of all efforts. Since 2006, the state has consistently been awarded the highest quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), meeting all ten structural elements/quality standards for high-quality preschool programs. Currently, Alabama is one of only five states that achieved this level of quality for its statewide program. OSR is dedicated to working with preschool programs to ensure that Alabama's 4-year-olds have access to high-quality learning experiences to ensure they are prepared for school and lifelong success.

Over the last 16 years early childhood professionals and preschool educators from across the state have worked to develop and refine what is now the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework. This framework incorporates program guidelines, classroom guidelines, early learning standards, professional development,

coaching methods, and monitoring practices to create a replicable model for high quality Pre-K programs. The components of this Framework include resources and support to enhance performance and learning and alignment with NIEER Quality Standards. Components are measured through on-going observation and authentic, research-based assessment. The Framework guides program development and program operations to ensure that Alabama's children are receiving high-quality programs in safe, supportive environments. When new First Class Pre-K programs are proposed, sub-grantees must agree to abide by and incorporate the standards and practices of the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework through an Alabama Pre-K Quality Assurance Contract in order to be considered for an award. Programs are monitored and evaluated using the Framework guidelines and standards to maintain quality and to promote student achievement consistently in all programs.

Improving teacher and administrator early education training programs and professional development are vital components of the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework. The most distinctive activity to support professional development is the development of the Reflective Coaching Model, a coaching and monitoring support system. The model includes both a First Class Coach and a First Class Monitor. The role of the Coach is distinct from the Monitor so that nuances associated with coaching Pre-K teachers do not compromise the evaluative/monitoring role of the Monitors. Given that principles of best practice in teaching support differentiated instruction, discussions at all levels of the system center on the value of providing different things for different people at different times. A tiered model of coaching has been developed and implemented to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher based on previous formative evaluation. The coaching model provides individualized support for Pre-K teachers based on needs that arise during the school year through a bottom-up approach with top-down support to develop a grass-roots professional development system. An annual conference and differentiated professional development are implemented throughout the year utilizing local, state, and national presenters based on teacher needs. A full time Professional Development Coordinator plans high quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration for Pre-K teachers, directors, and OSR staff. OSR has divided the state into eight regions that are purposefully structured in a manner that promotes increased support, consistency of program delivery, and increased accountability.

The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (ADSPC), focusing on 3-5 year-olds, are based on current research of teaching and learning from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and conform with recommendations by the National Research Council.

The standards are organized around nine areas of development: Approaches to Learning; Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Science; Creative Arts; Technology; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Health; and Daily Living. Each area of development identifies goals followed by specific learning standards that are developmentally appropriate across the 3-5 year-old age range.

The ADSPC have also been designed to be collectively reflective of the standards and curricula used in various preschool settings throughout the state. The standards serve as a natural progression to the kindergarten standards contained in the Alabama Courses of Study and describe outcomes desired for all children at the end of their preschool experience as they enter kindergarten. The ADSPC reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and the learning environment to meet the needs of all children.

The Classroom Guidelines provide descriptions and definitions of optimal classroom environment characteristics, the basics of classroom management, ideas for classroom displays, and guidance on lesson planning, and instructions on the use of the assessment tool Teaching Strategies GOLD for individualized, intentional instruction. All Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms are required to have a research-based instructional plan for effective teaching and learning that meets standards of developmentally-appropriate practice. Pre-K teachers are required to assess children's abilities and progress using the Teaching

Strategies GOLD Assessment Tool and to enter observations at checkpoint dates during the program year. The support of coaches and monitors for each Alabama First Class Pre-K teacher ensures that program and classroom guidelines are met. OSR evaluates all classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or Learning Environment Checklist (LEC). Coaches develop individualized improvement plans with teachers that reflect the assessment results plus personal improvement goals for teachers.

OSR defines school readiness as a condition whereby children enter school with an enthusiasm for learning, an ability to function in a social setting, age-appropriate communication and problem solving skills, age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and optimal health. Currently, there are no kindergarten entry assessments required by the Alabama Department of Education; however, DECE is working with local school systems to implement Teaching Strategies GOLD as a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). A pilot phase was completed during the 2015-2016 school year. Since PDG funds during this first year supported students in First Class Pre-K classrooms, no one received a KEA. DECE is working with partners, including the State Department of Education, to expand KEA statewide.

Alabama has identified and developed several initiatives in the state to support services for children and families to ensure that a child is healthy and ready for success in school. Led by the state's public/private organization dedicated to the needs of children, Alabama Partnership for Children, and in partnerships with state agencies (Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Alabama Department of Mental Health), First Class Pre-K has been closely aligned with programs to coordinate comprehensive services for families and children, specifically Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow.

The Strengthening Families (SF) framework is implemented in pre-K programs as a parent engagement model and supported through local family resource centers which provide a range of resources and services to families. Rather than building these supports within individual First Class Pre-K programs, OSR's emphasis is on connecting, coordinating, and linking through professional development, resource sharing, and community-wide planning for young children thus eliminating duplication of effort.

Through a partnership with twelve other organizations, the Help Me Grow (HMG) campaign was formed to link families to community resources, provide effective care coordination, and facilitate partnerships with state and local communities to improve accessibility and quality of support services for families and children. HMG ensures that all Pre-K children receive developmental screenings with the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE and connects families to the state's referral hotline, 2-1-1. OSR provides professional development to all lead teachers, assistant teachers, and directors to provide information on how to utilize this program. Classroom monitors, assigned to all Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms, receive professional development training to expand their ability to link families to these statewide initiatives.

The Alabama High-Need Communities receiving First Class Pre-K programs funded by the PDG were identified through a needs assessment that combined seven characteristics of high-need in the community with the level of available access to a high-quality Pre-K program. While all of Alabama's 67 counties have factors that would qualify them as High-Need Communities, counties representing those with the highest needs were ranked based on the following criteria:

- percentage of eligible four-year-olds;
- percentage of four-year-olds being served in Pre-K;
- high school graduation rate;
- percentage of English language learners in K-12 public schools;
- percentage of single parent families;
- presence of identified K-12 failing school(s);
- public school retention rates for both first and ninth grade; and
- juvenile violence rate.

Using these criteria, 23 of Alabama's 67 counties were determined to be at greatest risk and have the

highest needs. A Request for Proposals was developed by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and made available to all 67 counties. PDG funding was limited to the 23 counties identified in the needs assessment. All completed applications were evaluated by independent readers using a 10-point scoring rubric with additional points granted for the following circumstances: poverty based on free and reduced lunch status of nearest public school system; new access in underserved areas; high need county; and high need county with one or more failing schools. Further, all applicant sites were placed on a detailed map created through ArcGIS to visualize potential sites in the context of the under-five population, poverty, and existing early childhood resources including First Class Pre-K programs, Head Start, and MIECHV programs, and licensed and licensed-exempt child care settings. This visualization assisted with the final decision for awards (PDG-funded and state-funded) by reducing crowd-out in areas where adequate opportunities existed for access to high-quality Pre-K while identifying opportunities for greatest impact based on underserved areas or areas without access to high-quality Pre-K programs. Also, the grant process carefully examined each potential sub-grantee's ability to meet specific First Class Pre-K quality assurances and to abide by rigorous operating guidelines. Finally, visits were made to potential sites to evaluate the suitability of location and physical characteristics as well as condition of the proposed class.

Despite these many successes, significant partnerships, and strong infrastructure development, participation in the Alabama First Class Pre-K program was relatively low. During the 2013-2014 school year (prior to the PDG), Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms served 5,598 of the state's 60,665 eligible four-year-old children, representing 9.1% of the four-year-old population. The PDG funds allowed for the establishment of 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) which provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 2,036 of the state's 58,740 four-year-olds during the 2015-2016 school year (as of December 1, 2015). This represents 3.5% of eligible four-year-olds in Alabama. PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool programs for 10,535 of the state's 58,740 four-year-olds during the 2015-2016 school year (as of December 1, 2015 - Additional classrooms and students were added in January 2016, bringing the current total to 11,736 children in 652 classrooms. This represents 17.9% of eligible four-year-olds in Alabama. Overall (PDG-funding and state funding), 202 new awards were made across the state. As with all state-funded First Class-Pre-K programs, sub-grantees must locally match the award in order to receive a grant. Matching includes direct funds, in-kind supports, and sliding-scale fees.

PDG funds have also supported increased capacity for evaluation of First Class Pre-K outcomes and longitudinal research. A diverse research team has been expanded to support the state's ability to identify and present programmatic accomplishments, student performance, and cost-savings, and to address longitudinal research capacity. This research team includes members from the Department of Early Childhood Education, an external data specialist (Thinkdata Solutions), the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health. Data analyses focus on student performance on standardized assessments of reading and math at third grade, retention, absenteeism, special education, cost-savings, pre- and post-First Class Pre-K performance on Teaching Strategies GOLD, and the pilot Teaching Strategies KEA. Early results demonstrate appreciable and meaningful, positive differences for students who received First Class Pre-K, in the areas of school attendance, grade retention, school readiness, special education services, and third grade reading performance. Though the initial focus of research and data analyses has been on birth to third grade experiences, the continued addition of longitudinal data will allow further research questions to be explored stretching into high school and beyond.

DECE is collaborating with ALSDE to develop and implement an early childhood workforce development plan with the goal of having quality teachers and multiple avenues to obtain certification. In collaboration with Alabama Partnership for Children, DECE supports the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) initiative. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ALABAMA is a scholarship program that was developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the educational process more affordable, increasing wages, and reducing staff turnover rates. Scholarships are currently offered for the CDA (Child Development Associate) assessment fee, associate degrees in child development and early care and education, and bachelor's degrees in child development and early care and education. Additional scholarships are available through PDG funds administered by

DECE for those for which the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program is not feasible. These funds are administered directly to higher education institutions specifically for teaching staff to obtain early childhood education and child development specialized coursework.

The addition of PDG funds to state allocations has significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama. The state is making steady progress towards its ambitious but achievable goals of increasing access to high-quality preschool programs to 26% of eligible four-year-olds through 895 classrooms by the end of the grant period. These gains will be sustained through state allocations to maintain newly-added classrooms. This is a realistic expectation as Governor Robert Bentley has provided critical leadership priority-setting for funding First Class Pre-K and the Alabama State Legislature has demonstrated its belief in and commitment to state Pre-K education by providing level or increased funding each year, with significantly increased appropriations in the budget years of 2010-2014. Public support for voluntary, high-quality preschool programs is high in Alabama and advocacy efforts are led through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance.



**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: AL

PR/Award #: S419A150014

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.

During the 2013-2014 school year [prior to the Preschool Development Grant (PDG)], Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms served 5,598 of the state's 60,665 eligible four-year-old children, representing 9.1% of the four-year-old population. PDG funds allowed for the establishment of 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) which provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 2,036 of the state's 58,740 four-year-olds during the 2015-2016 school year (as of December 1, 2015). This represents 3.5% of eligible four-year-olds in Alabama. The addition of PDG funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama.

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.

The Alabama First Class Pre-K program is committed to ensuring equal access and treatment for students with disabilities, and every effort is made to ensure the elimination of possible disability barriers within preschool programs, curriculum, and activities. This strictly adheres to the provisions outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the anti-discrimination policy established by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education which specifically states that no person shall be discriminated against due to a disability. A qualified special education consultant is involved with grant activities. This individual is responsible for ensuring that the program model is implemented with respect to the inclusion of all children with appropriate accommodations in the least restrictive environment.

In 2010, the Department of Early Childhood Education (then named Department of Children's Affairs) and the Special Education section of the Alabama Department of Education created one set of standards for all preschool children in the state. The document, Alabama Developmental Standards for

Preschool Children (ADSPC) for 3-5 year-olds, is a result of the shared mission that all children should be provided school readiness experiences that meet their individual needs. The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and the learning environment to meet the needs of all children. Objectives were added to many of the ADSPC to provide a hierarchy of learning targets for children whose functional level is delayed at the time they enter preschool programs. These objectives provide a systematic measurement tool to monitor programs for children with disabilities and serve as accountability measures to determine the effectiveness of IDEA Part B preschool programs.

For Preschool Development Grant-funded classrooms (not including other state-funded programs), 102 of the 2,036 students (5.0%) had previously being identified as having a disability. Additionally, Pre-K staff are actively working with teachers and parents in the screening and referral process. First Class Pre-K has a proven track record in identifying, referring, and serving children with special needs. Professional development related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in classrooms is planned for preschool teachers in 2016. Further, the program will expand its collaborations with IDEA Part B preschool programs and Alabama's Early Intervention System (Part C program) to facilitate referrals and will continue recruitment efforts, including those focused on students with disabilities.

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

The Alabama High-Need Communities receiving First Class Pre-K programs funded by the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) were identified through a needs assessment that combined seven characteristics of high-need in the community with the level of available access to a high-quality Pre-K program. While all of Alabama's 67 counties have factors that would qualify them as High-Need Communities, counties representing those with the highest needs were ranked based on the following criteria:

- percentage of eligible four-year-olds;
- percentage of four-year-olds being served in Pre-K;
- high school graduation rate;
- percentage of English language learners in K-12 public schools;
- percentage of single parent families;
- presence of identified K -12 failing school(s);
- public school retention rates for both first and ninth grade; and
- juvenile violence rate.

Using these criteria, 23 of Alabama's 67 counties were determined to be at greatest risk and having the highest needs. Those 23 counties were sub-divided into two groups, with priority being given to those with identified failing K-12 public school(s).

A Request for Proposals was developed by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and made available to all 67 counties. Initially, PDG funding was limited to the 23 counties identified in the needs assessment. All completed applications were evaluated by independent readers using a 10-point scoring rubric with additional points granted for the following circumstances: poverty based on free and reduced lunch status of nearest public school system; new access in underserved areas; high need county; and high need county with one or more failing schools. Further, all applicant sites were placed on a detailed map created through ArcGIS to visualize potential sites in the context of the under-five population, poverty, and existing early childhood resources including First Class Pre-K programs, Head Start, and MIECHV programs, and licensed and licensed-exempt child care settings. This visualization assisted with the final decision for awards (PDG-funded and state-funded) by reducing crowd-out in areas where adequate opportunities existed for access to high-quality Pre-K while identifying opportunities for greatest impact based on underserved areas or areas without access to high-quality Pre-K programs. Also, the grant process carefully examined each potential sub-grantee's ability to meet specific First Class Pre-K quality assurances and to abide by rigorous operating guidelines. Finally, nearly 300 visits were made to potential sites to evaluate the suitability of location and physical characteristics as well as condition of the proposed class.

Overall (PDG-funding and state funding), 202 new awards were made across three grant categories: Excellence (up to \$45,000), Tiered (\$80,200-\$92,700), and New (\$120,000-\$150,000). The delivery system is diverse, including public schools, private child care, faith-based settings, Head Start (community action only), community-based/non-profit centers, college or university settings, and a military school.

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.

During the 2013-2014 school year [prior to the Preschool Development Grant (PDG)], Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms served 5,505 of the state's 60,665 eligible four-year-old children, representing 9.1% of the four-year-old population. PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool programs for 10,535 of the state's 58,740 four-year-olds during the 2015-2016 school year (as of December 1, 2015. Additional classrooms and students were added in January 2016, bringing the current total to 11,736 *we think this is closer to 13,000* children in 652 *think this is 657* classrooms). This represents 17.9% of eligible four-year-olds in Alabama. The addition of PDG funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama. The state is making steady progress towards its ambitious but achievable goals of increasing access to high-quality preschool programs to 26% of eligible four-year-olds through 895 classrooms by the end of the grant period. These gains will be sustained through state allocations to maintain newly-added classrooms. This is a realistic expectation as Governor Robert Bentley has provided critical leadership priority-setting for funding First Class Pre-K and the Alabama State Legislature has demonstrated its belief in and commitment to state pre-K education by providing level or increased funding each year, with significantly increased appropriations in the budget years of 2010-2016. Public support for voluntary, high-quality preschool programs is high in Alabama, and advocacy efforts are led through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance.

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.

Since Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funds for the first year supported students in First Class Pre-K classrooms, no one received a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Both performance and skill progression during the Pre-K year are assessed using the teacher-scored observation tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD. Students are assessed on six domains at entry (fall) and exit (spring), with scores compared to widely-held expectations for four-year-olds. Participation in one session of Teaching Strategies GOLD Intro and Lab is a requirement of all new lead and auxiliary teachers of First Class Pre-K. Directors of First Class Pre-K are required to attend Teaching Strategies GOLD Intro and Lab as well as one session from Teaching Strategies GOLD Reporting.

Alabama's Office of School Readiness defines school readiness as a condition whereby children enter school with an enthusiasm for learning, an ability to function in a social setting, age-appropriate communication and problem solving skills, age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and optimal health. Despite this broad definition, school readiness expectations have been as diverse as the number of school districts in the state, and Alabama has not adopted a consistent, mandatory assessment for all kindergarten programs.

In fall of the 2015-2016 school year, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Office of School Readiness piloted the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD-Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). KEA is research-based and is being used by other states including Michigan, Massachusetts, and Louisiana. The KEA provides teachers and parents with important criterion-based information about a child's learning and development in six domains at the beginning of kindergarten.

The Office of School Readiness, in partnership with the Early Learning Action Network of the Bold Goals work at United Way of Central Alabama, funded opportunities to participate throughout the state and provided training for kindergarten teachers in the use of the Teaching Strategies GOLD KEA. Teachers received incentives to participate including professional development stipends, Pre-K Conference admission, a personal technology device, and substitute teacher support to allow release time to complete the assessment.

The pilot program included volunteers from 21 school systems statewide and gathered data from approximately 2,700 students, some of whom had previously received First Class Pre-K and some who did not. The state plans to expand the pilot program throughout the state with a goal of universal testing for all Kindergarten students, to support a consistent measurement and reporting system for school readiness, to provide classroom information for teachers, and to facilitate longitudinal studies of the impact of high-quality Pre-K programs.

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.

Over the last 13 years, early childhood professionals and preschool educators from across the state have worked to develop and refine what is now the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework. This Framework incorporates program guidelines, classroom guidelines, early learning standards, professional development, coaching methods, and monitoring practices to create a replicable model for high quality Pre-K programs. Components of this Framework include resources and support to enhance performance and learning and alignment with the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) Quality Standards. Components are measured through on-going observation and authentic, research-based assessment. The Framework guides program development and program operations to ensure that Alabama's children are prepared for school achievement and lifelong success. When new First Class Pre-K programs are proposed, sub-grantees must agree to abide by and incorporate the standards and practices of the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework through an Alabama Pre-K Quality Assurances Contract in order to be considered for an award. Programs are monitored and evaluated using Framework guidelines and standards to maintain quality and to promote student achievement consistently in all programs.

As Alabama has expanded access to preschool programs, the state has maintained high-quality as the center for all of its efforts. Since 2006, the state has consistently met all ten NIEER structural elements/quality standards for high-quality preschool programs. Currently, Alabama is one of only five states to meet all ten standards for its statewide program.

See section B1-B3 for more information on the Alabama Framework, Quality Standards, and the First Class Coaching and Monitoring Program.

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.

A maximum of 29% of the Year 1 Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funds has been used for building and enhancing infrastructure in existing and new preschool classrooms, including employing additional coaches and monitors, ensuring proper equipment and technology, professional development and other quality-enhancing activities that improve the delivery of high-quality preschool programs to eligible children. The Department of Early Childhood Education allocated \$5,000,000 or 29% of the PDG to build and enhance infrastructure by implementing the Department's rigorous monitoring program and the Alabama Reflective Coaching Model, developed by the Department in cooperation with faculty at the University of Alabama Birmingham School of Education. Additionally, infrastructure funds have been used to continue expanding professional development opportunities for teachers, auxiliary teachers, and directors/administrators from sub-grantees and potential sub-grantees. Professional development has been an outreach tool to continue to identify potential early learning providers in the defined High-Need Communities.

Infrastructure enhancement funds have also been used to further develop the capacity for evaluation of First Class Pre-K outcomes and longitudinal research. A diverse research team has been expanded to support the state's ability to identify and present programmatic accomplishments, student performance, and cost-savings as well as address longitudinal research capacity. This research team includes members from the Department of Early Childhood Education, an external data specialist (Thinkdata Solutions), the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health.

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.

Since 2006, Alabama's First Class Pre-K program has been nationally recognized as a high-quality program by the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER). Alabama First Class Pre-K has consistently met all ten quality standards identified by NIEER and has exceeded them by ensuring that all teachers in its diverse delivery system earn salaries that are comparable to those of K-12 public school instructional staff.

The NIEER Quality Indicators are met through the following Office of School Readiness requirements.

1. Early Learning Standards - Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (Online at www.children.alabama.gov under the Office of School Readiness section).
2. Teacher Degree - Lead teacher must have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, at minimum.
3. Teacher Specialized Training - Lead teacher must have specialized training in early childhood field.
4. Auxiliary Teacher Degree - Auxiliary teacher must have a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent (9 hours of approved coursework in child development), at minimum.
5. Teacher In-Service - Lead teacher must have at least 30 hours yearly in-service professional development and training.
6. Maximum Class Size - Maximum number of children per classroom must be 20 or fewer; recommended number is 18
7. Staff-Child Ratio - Lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in classroom must be 1:10 or better.
8. Screening/Referral and Support Services - Provide physical, vision, hearing and dental screenings and referrals and at least one additional support service to families. All parents complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) developmental screener.
9. Comprehensive Curriculum - First Class Pre-K classrooms will implement the Alabama First Class Framework, which consists of the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children, First Class Program Guidelines, First Class Classroom Guidelines, the ASQ-3 Developmental Screener and the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment. Classroom guidance and support will be provided by First Class Coaches.
10. Monitoring - Site visits and monitoring will be provided by First Class Monitors to ensure quality and compliance.

The First Class Pre-K program is designed to provide a full day of developmentally appropriate instruction and support for 4-year-old children. The Pre-K program provides 6.5 hours per day of high quality and developmentally appropriate activities and instruction, five days per week. OSR recommends 180 days per year for eligible 4-year old children. Each grantee is funded for 187 days to include 7 days of professional development for staff.

The Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework incorporates program guidelines, classroom guidelines, early learning standards, professional development, coaching methods, and monitoring practices to create a replicable model for High-Quality Pre-K programs. The components of this Framework include resources and support to enhance performance and learning and alignment with the NIEER Quality Standards. Components are measured through on-going observation and authentic, research-based assessment. The Framework guides program development and program operations to ensure that Alabama's children are prepared for school achievement and lifelong success. Programs are monitored and evaluated using the First Class Framework guidelines and standards to maintain quality and to promote student achievement consistently in all programs. New Alabama First Pre-K classes added as a result of the Preschool Development Grant or through continued state funding are required to adhere to the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework and Program Assurances as conditions of their sub-grantee award to ensure continued high-quality of programs.

The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (ADSPC), focusing on 3-5 year-olds, are based on current research on teaching and learning from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and conform with recommendations of the National Research Council.

The standards are organized around nine areas of development: Approaches to Learning Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Science; Creative Arts; Technology; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Health and Daily Living. Each area of development identifies goals followed by specific learning standards that are developmentally appropriate across the 3-5 year-old age range.

The ADSPC have also been designed to be collectively reflective of the standards and curricula used in various preschool settings throughout the state. The standards serve as a natural progression to the kindergarten standards contained in the Alabama Courses of Study and describe outcomes desired for all children at the end of their preschool experience as they enter kindergarten. The ADSPC reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and the learning environment to meet the needs of all children. Also included in the standards are Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP) objectives which provide examples of actions children might do and supportive practices teachers can incorporate in the classroom. ELPP objectives are to be used by teachers of students with disabilities as well as in helping teachers recognize emerging behaviors in children as they master a skill.

The Alabama First Class Pre-K Program Guidelines, Classroom Guidelines, and Grant Assurances have been created and published by the Office of School Readiness to ensure that Pre-k programs provide a safe and high-quality learning environment for all preschool children. The Classroom Guidelines provide descriptions and definitions of optimal classroom environment characteristics, basics of classroom management, ideas for classroom displays, guidance on lesson planning, and instructions on the use of the assessment tool Teaching Strategies GOLD for individualized, intentional instruction. All Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms are required to have a research-based instructional plan for effective teaching and learning that meets standards of developmentally-appropriate practice. Pre-K teachers are required to assess children's abilities and progress using the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment Tool and to enter observations at checkpoint dates during the program year. The support of coaches and monitors for each Alabama First Class Pre-K teacher ensures that program and classroom guidelines are met. The Office of School Readiness evaluates all classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or Learning Environment Checklist (LEC). Coaches develop an individualized improvement plan with teachers that reflects the assessment results and the teacher's personal improvement goals.

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.

Year 1 targets included establishing an additional 100 classrooms and serving 1,800 new children. Actual numbers exceeded targets with the establishment of 117 classrooms and 2,036 children served with Preschool Development Grant funds. The cost per slot was \$6,336 from PDG funds plus at least a 25% local match is required.

There are no proposed or approved changes in targets for Years 2-4.

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 efforts of many organizations support the success of Alabama First Class Pre-K. OSR works collaboratively with other local, state, and federal organizations to provide sustained support for each site. Cross-sector services include partnerships with the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Alabama State Department of Education, LEAs, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, Alabama Power Company, and the Alabama Partnership for Children. Each of these organizations offers assistance to our Alabama First Class Pre-K sites, enabling OSR to provide comprehensive services including health, vision, and physical screenings as well as assistance for children and families in need of additional school support including special education services for students with disabilities or developmental delays and for English language learners.

Provision of High-Quality Pre-K programs requires the implementation of effective instructional practices. OSR works to ensure the success of Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms by providing individualized professional development for all sub-grantees. Professional development needs are identified through BaseLineEdge, Teaching Strategies GOLD, as well as by recommendations of the assigned First Class Coaches and Monitors (see below). Coordination of professional development activities is managed through STIPd, the statewide database of approved professional development opportunities for Pre-K-12 educators. Sub-grantees may participate in professional development at no cost. STIPd allows the teacher, site, and OSR to document and access records of training sessions attended by Alabama First Class Pre-K directors and teachers.

Improving teacher and administrator early education training programs and professional development are vital components of the Alabama First Class Pre-K Framework. The most distinctive activity to support professional development is the development of the Reflective Coaching Model, a coaching and monitoring support system. The model includes both a First Class Coach and a First Class Monitor. The role of the Coach is distinct from the Monitor so that nuances associated with coaching Pre-K teachers do not compromise the evaluative/monitoring role of the Monitors. Given that principles of best practice in teaching support differentiated instruction, discussions at all levels of the system center on the value of providing different things for different people at different times. A tiered model of coaching has been developed and implemented to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher based on previous formative evaluation. The coaching model provides individualized support for Pre-K teachers based on needs that arise during the school year through a bottom-up approach with top-down support to develop a grass-roots professional development system. An annual conference and differentiated professional development are implemented throughout the year utilizing local, state, and national presenters based on teacher needs. A full time Professional Development Coordinator plans high quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration for Pre-K teachers, directors, and OSR staff. OSR has divided the state into eight regions that are purposefully structured in a manner that promotes increased support, consistency of program delivery, and increased accountability.

First Class Coaches and Monitors are specialists that are experienced in multiple early childhood content areas ranging from early childhood teaching and learning, curriculum development and instruction, professional development and training, and early childhood program administration. The primary role of

the First Class Coach is to visit assigned Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms (average caseload is 15 classrooms) to coach teachers using reflective practice to improve instruction. It is through the coaching model that strong, supportive relationships are formed, individual goals are set and achieved, and the process of teaching and learning for continuous improvement occurs. OSR has embraced the idea that in order to better meet the individual needs of classroom teachers, Coaches first and foremost, must be viewed in a positive, non-threatening manner. In order to achieve this, OSR clearly distinguishes the role of the Coach from that of the Monitor. As a result, the coaching model is centered on focused on-site observations and the co-creation of program and professional development goals through joint planning, and hands-on assistance by the Coach. Coaches also provide practical, operational help to teachers as needed assisting with classroom set-up, materials selection, and lesson planning. Coaches also utilize classroom level and individual student level assessments to provide structured classroom feedback and to enhance the teacher's ability to translate the information into instructional strategies to support the individual needs of Pre-K students.

Just as the First Class Coach works to ensure the quality of instruction in individual First Class Pre-K classrooms, the First Class Monitor provides program support to directors, accountants, and pre-school owners and/or providers. Each Monitor has an average case load of 30 classrooms. The primary role of the First Class Monitor is to provide oversight to all state-funded Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms to ensure program quality and accountability. Monitoring increases the level of transparency among all First-Class Pre-K providers and supports OSR by providing critical data that are essential for continued growth throughout the state. Monitors work to ensure that programs are supported in their efforts to follow OSR Program Guidelines, which are central to the organization and structure of First Class Pre-K in the state. Monitors regularly work with programs to ensure that quality indicators such as fiscal accountability, enrollment, and teacher qualifications are met and sustained throughout the year.

Monitoring is provided through an individualized approach similar to that of coaching. Through the use of the Compliance Monitoring System (CMS), Monitors have the ability increase or decrease the level of support needed at each program. The CMS is designed to lend more assistance to programs that are in need of more intensive support and may be at-risk of non-compliance. Monitors visit classrooms to ensure quality and use data gathered in the CMS to determine the needed level of support for each program. If an Alabama First Class Pre-K class is in compliance with all guidelines, the classroom will receive a follow up visit within 30 to 60 days. Those with three or fewer non-compliance issues will receive a follow up visit within ten days. A classroom with four to six non-compliance issues will receive a follow up visit within five days and will be placed on probation. Those with seven to ten issues are given a follow up visit in three days and funding is terminated if the issues are not resolved. Communication between Monitors and program directors occurs on-site (generally monthly), over the phone and via email. Monitors also communicate with First Class Coaches to ensure a seamless delivery of technical assistance to quickly resolve any matters that may impact an Alabama First Class Pre-K classroom.

Each First Class Pre-K program develops a transition plan to support children and their parents in successfully transitioning to Kindergarten. This involves partnerships with the LEA and other Early Learning Providers in organizing activities such as visits to the kindergarten classroom to meet the teacher and parent workshops on Kindergarten readiness. Working with the Alabama Partnership for Children, OSR is assisting communities in developing community-wide Kindergarten Transition Teams that explore available resources for high quality early learning experiences, linkages between early childhood programs and schools into which they feed, and relevant engagement of parents and families into planning a smooth and effective transition into Kindergarten. Teams include elementary/primary school administrators, teachers, family support personnel, and others who can ensure that the first few grades of school are developmentally and educationally appropriate and those children with identified special needs transition smoothly from Early Intervention. Schools also provide needed data to the Kindergarten Transition Team on learning outcomes and educational success and can provide professional development and other support to preschool programs. The Kindergarten Transition Team also provides resources and professional development to support and enable the use of an effective kindergarten readiness assessment, Teaching Strategies GOLD. This school readiness assessment is a key component of the team's work and

provides needed data across systems and programs to identify and understand gaps in readiness, to pinpoint specific areas of concern, and to inform professional development planning.

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 Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is the lead agency for the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. DECE is well-positioned to coordinate the state's preschool programs and services such as the Head Start State Collaboration Office and the Office of School Readiness (OSR) are housed within the department. DECE is also the statutorily designated agency to administer and lead the State Children's Policy Council (CPC). CPC is designated by state law as a coordinating entity for children's services and brings together agencies that impact children. DECE and the Governor's office worked together to designate the State CPC as the state's State Advisory Council that meets the requirements described in Section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837(b)). With some additional appointments, the state CPC has also been designated as the Early Childhood Advisory Council. The re-formation of CPC/ECAC as a unified group has resulted in improved coordination, collaboration, and oversight of all services and programs for children in Alabama from birth to age five. Also through the creation of the Pre-K Collaboration Task Force, partnerships between DECE and the State Department of Education have been established. Monthly meetings of the Task Force bring together all parties that serve Alabama preschool children - Title I, Head Start, Special Education, Migrant, Homeless, and Child Subsidy - to address barriers to the delivery of a high quality program to all children.

OSR has supported the United Way of Central Alabama's Bold Goals effort to assess the Kindergarten readiness of more than 13,000 Kindergarten students in 21 school systems in a five-county region representing the largest concentration of Alabama's population. This project includes high poverty and wealthy school districts in both rural and urban settings. The Bold Goals effort is coordinated through the United Way of Central Alabama and is supported by business, education, and higher education partners.

Alignment of the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with the state's Early Learning Guidelines has created a set of standards that describes what all children should know and be able to do from birth to Kindergarten. Discussions are ongoing between the Alabama Department of Human Resources and DECE to merge and align these documents and have only one set of standards to be used by all programs in the state serving children birth to five.

Alabama has identified and developed several initiatives in the state to support services for children and families that ensure a child is healthy and ready for success in school. Led by the state's public/private organization dedicated to the needs of children, Alabama Partnership for Children, and in partnerships with state agencies (Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Child Abuse Prevention, Alabama Department of Mental Health), First Class Pre-K has been closely involved in programs to coordinate comprehensive services for families and children, specifically Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow.

The Strengthening Families (SF) framework is implemented in Pre-K programs as a parent engagement model that incorporates:

- ensuring program quality and building systemic linkages to other programs and resources to support families;
- reaching isolated, hard-to-reach families and meeting the needs of eligible preschool-age children such as those in the child welfare system;
- helping families build protective factors and engaging parents and families as decision-makers in their children's education; and
- supporting families during the transition to kindergarten.

The state's Strengthening Families initiative is delivered through local family resource centers that provide a range of supports and services to families. Rather than build these supports within individual First Class Pre-K programs, OSR 's emphasis is on connecting and linking through professional development, resource sharing, and community-wide planning for young children thus eliminating duplication of effort.

Through a partnership with twelve other organizations, the Help Me Grow (HMG) campaign was formed to link families to community resources, provide effective care coordination, and facilitate partnerships with state and local communities to improve the accessibility and quality of support services for families and children. HMG is an intentional and focused set of strategies that build on existing resources and programs. HMG ensures that all Pre-K children receive developmental screenings with the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE and connects families to the state's referral hotline 2-1-1. Through the first year of PDG funds, this service was expanded from a regional pilot to a statewide service available to all Alabama families. The 2-1-1 network is the single point of entry for families and providers and facilitates appropriate referrals and connections. HMG is delivered in partnership with physicians, mental health professionals, United Way-211, early childhood programs, early intervention, and programs for children with special health care needs. By connecting Alabama First Class Pre-K programs to this network for early childhood assessment programs and referrals to appropriate interventions and support services, local costs are minimized through strong partnerships and collaboration with the existing and effective network. OSR provides professional development to all lead teachers, assistant teachers, and directors regarding how to utilize this program. Classroom monitors, assigned for all Alabama First Class Pre-K classrooms, receive professional development training to expand their ability to link families to these statewide initiatives.

Additional support for families is provided through First Teacher, Alabama's Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program. First Teacher is a division within DECE and provides home visitation services to pregnant women and families with children ages birth to five years. These services are delivered through three evidenced-based home visiting models: Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, and Nurse-Family Partnership. DECE is working with the Pre-K Research Team and the Evaluation/Research Team for First Teacher to identify children who received home visiting and Pre-K services to better understand the impact of these programs on child health, family strengths, and school readiness. Further, Alabama is one of ten states from across the nation selected to participate in the Medicaid and Home Visiting Learning Network, a forum for state peer-to-peer learning about how to use Medicaid to finance home visiting services for mothers and young children. Each participating state has a core team of dynamic leaders and policy-makers working together with other state teams to share ideas and strategies.

DECE has supported and participated in the work of the Department of Human Resources Child Care Division as it develops and pilots a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). All programs in childcare and Head Start that have state-funded Pre-K classrooms will be required to participate in the Alabama State QRIS.

Partnerships have been formed to support programs in meeting the needs of children with disabilities and English language learners. The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) divisions of Special Education and Federal Programs (Title I and Title III) are actively working with First Class Pre-K programs to ensure children receive appropriate services. Preschool special educators have been trained to use Teaching Strategies GOLD, and coaches and monitors have been trained to work with Pre-K teachers to provide services for children in special education.

DECE is building its capacity for outcome evaluation and longitudinal research. ALSDE utilizes iNow, a student data system, for students in K-12. This system manages data for demographics, assessment, attendance, and performance of students. Each student is issued a unique state student identification (SSID) number which follows them throughout their school career. Through strong collaboration with ALSDE, DECE has worked to collect identifying information that is matched with the SSID. These two departments have hired a shared staff person to continue to match student data, identify state Pre-k students, and follow their progress as a group. De-identified data are shared with the Pre-K Research Team, a diverse group of researchers and practitioners that supports outcome evaluation and research.

Data analyses focus on student performance on standardized assessments of reading and math at third grade, retention, absenteeism, special education, cost-savings, pre- and post-First Class Pre-K performance on Teaching Strategies GOLD, and the pilot Teaching Strategies KEA. Though the initial focus of research and data analyses has been on birth to third grade experiences, the addition of longitudinal data will allow researchers to address additional research questions that stretch into high school and beyond.

DECE is collaborating with ALSDE to develop and implement an early childhood workforce development plan with the goal of having quality teachers and multiple avenues to obtain certification. In collaboration with Alabama Partnership for Children, DECE supports the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) initiative. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ALABAMA is a scholarship program that was developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the educational process more affordable, increasing wages, and reducing staff turnover rates. Scholarships are currently offered for the CDA (Child Development Associate) assessment fee, associate degrees in child development and early care and education, and bachelor's degrees in child development and early care and education.

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*.

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable

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.

All PDG funds were obligated and/or expended during the grant fiscal year. Discrepancies are defined and explained in the budget amendment request. The adjusted amounts in each line item are reflected in the APR budget.

Alabama is submitting a budget amendment due to the total of all the adjustments equating to a sum greater than \$500,000. This budget amendment is reflected and submitted into the APR end of the first year budget.

The budget amendment requested includes a decrease in the amount of the Contractual (line item 6) by \$958,033 for a line item total of \$1,947,373. The budget amendment requested also includes an increase in the amount of Funds for sub-grantees (line item 11) by the amount of \$1,163,107 for a line item total of \$13,663,107.

All funds transferred from line items Travel (line item 3), Supplies (line item 5), and Other (line item 7) and Technical Assistance (line item 12) reflect a less than \$500,000 change.

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).

No substantive changes expected.

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.

The Alabama Legislature is currently considering Alabama's Education Trust Fund budget which will be voted on in the next few weeks. The Governor has recommended a \$20 million increase in state funds to both sustain programs established through Year 1 of PDG funding (\$10,000,000) as well as an additional amount for new state funded classes.

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.

No discrepancies in subrecipients approved budgets and total expenditures for the reporting year.

