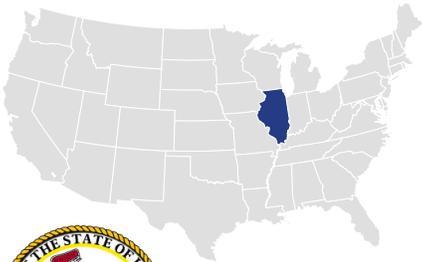


PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

2015 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Illinois





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 #: S419B150004 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 17

3. Project Title: Preschool Development Grants - Expansion

4. Grantee Name: Office of the Governor - Illinois

5. Grantee Address: Office of Early Childhood Dev., 100 W. Randolph, Suite 16-100

City: Chicago State: Illinois Zip: 60601

6. Project Director Name: Kelley Washington

Title: Executive Director

Phone #: (312) 814-2121 Ext.: _____ Fax #: (312) 814-0906

Email Address: kelley.washington@illinois.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	\$5,813,955.75	\$332,932.00
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: 07/01/2015 To: 06/30/2016
- Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: _____
- Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only) Provisional Final Other Specify other: _____
- d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:
- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

10. Performance Measures Status

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



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

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

Grantee State: IL

PR/Award #: S419B150004

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.

Building on the strong foundation of our state-funded Preschool for All program, Illinois successfully launched the first Preschool Development Grant-funded classrooms in the nation in spring 2015. Four classrooms in Aurora West School District 129 (Aurora) and Lighthouse Learning Center (Metro East area) prepared a total of 68 children for kindergarten success through a pilot of our comprehensive, full-day model. Since the launch of those classrooms, Illinois has rapidly established our Preschool Expansion program model in communities across the state, connecting our most at-risk young learners to early education opportunities that meet and exceed the nationally-recognized elements of a High-Quality Preschool Program.

Key Accomplishments

In our first year of implementation, Illinois successfully served 3,110 children across 19 high-need communities, expanding access to children below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line. Illinois prioritized enrollment of children identified with four significant risk factors; of the enrolled children in year one, 5.1% were children experiencing homelessness, 6% were children involved in the child welfare system, 9% were from families below 50% of the federal poverty limits and 10.4% were children with IEPs. This data demonstrates that our Sub-grantees have successfully developed systems and strategies to recruit and enroll the most at-risk children in Illinois, placing us on a clear trajectory towards our state goal of preparing 80% of Illinois children for kindergarten success by 2021.

During a structured period of planning and startup during the spring and summer of 2015, our Sub-grantees developed the infrastructure necessary to support quality and implement comprehensive supports for families. As a result, the programs serving these 3,110 children are implementing all twelve elements of a high-quality preschool program and have built new and sustainable capacity to meet the needs of the most at-risk children and families. Each Sub-grantee has hired a staff member as an instructional leader, with specific and dedicated responsibility for planning and implementing embedded professional development and advancing instructional quality. In addition, programs have hired staff dedicated to parent education, family engagement and support, and implementing linkages to comprehensive services.

Illinois has supported the enhancement of this infrastructure in our Sub-grantees by establishing an innovative program support initiative. Inspired by the framework of the State's highly-successful model of teacher coaching, connecting instructional coaches to teachers for a two year period to develop their instructional capacity and skill-set, this program support initiative engaged specialists to work individually with programs in building sustainable systems and administrative capacity. Our team of five specialists has worked closely with programs since the late fall and have already recorded some notable accomplishments. These have included: strengthening a relationship between a school district, Head Start program and Preschool Development Grant-funded program in a community; helping a school district create an effective strategy to support increased enrollment in their community partner sites, and; supporting programs in navigating the intricacies of special education requirements to ensure that all children receive the services that they need to thrive. Several programs reported that this proactive approach has been an effective resources in understanding the new

elements of this program and moving from compliance to quality, particularly in developing strategies for family engagement.

Another notable success is that our Sub-grantees partnered with their communities to strengthen existing and develop new and innovative collaborative partnerships that increased access to high-quality programs, supported sustainable delivery of services and empowered families with the tools and resources needed to reach their goals. The Preschool Development Grant has served as a catalyst to bring together stakeholders who share a mission and commitment to serve young children and their families. Several programs reported exciting examples of the successful fruits of these partnerships in year one:

- The Rockford school district improved internal collaboration as a result of the Preschool Development Grant to improve recruitment and enrollment of children experiencing homelessness. The district's Families in Transition office, which addresses the needs of homeless families, coordinated closely with the early childhood Screening and Placement office to collaboratively prioritize those families for placement. As a result, 34% of the children served by Rockford's PDG program are defined as homeless and the mayor of Rockford has developed a cross-agency initiative to ensure even higher enrollment of homeless families in early childhood programs. The November 2015 Administration for Children and Families newsletter on Early Childhood Development featured Rockford's success
- PDG has fostered communication and collaboration between school districts, a community-based organization and a Head Start grantee in the Carpentersville and Elgin communities. Children's Home and Aid, school districts CUSD 300 and U-46 and Two Rivers Head Start have increased their communication to avoid duplication, improve transitions to kindergarten, share resources for the benefit of families and coordinate to increase outreach to the most at-risk families. Although these relationships are still developing, some early achievements, including planning for shared parent education between CUSD 300 and Children's Home and Aid, cross-referral between Children's Home and Aid and Two Rivers Head Start and a shared approach to kindergarten readiness.
- In the North Chicago community, the school district leveraged PDG as a catalyst to establish a new partnership this year to co-locate their new early childhood center with the local Head Start program. In addition, the district has established a strong collaboration with the Women's Leadership Council of the Lake County United Way. Already, this group has worked to provide holiday gifts to each child in the program and actively working towards a goal of establishing a library for families on site at the center. In addition, the mayor of North Chicago has built early childhood education as a priority in the city's implementation of the My Brother's Keeper initiative, further enhancing the connection to the community.
- The school district in Decatur has established an exciting new partnership with Crossings Healthcare, a medical and mental health partner in their community. In addition to serving as an accessible medical home for their families, Crossings has established parent support groups and workshops, helping parents navigate topics such as consistency in parenting, parenting techniques and children's developmental stages. The district additionally leveraged a partnership with the cardiac department at their local hospital, St. Mary's, resulting in a holiday toy and new shoes for each child.
- A partnership between the Illinois State University College of Nursing and our PDG Sub-grantee in McLean County, the Unit 5 school district, has brought nursing students into classrooms to provide weekly health and mental health programming to children. This has included lessons on tooth brushing and other health areas. This collaboration is a part of the America's Promise School Project.
- In Rock Island County, the Regional Office of Education serves as the PDG Sub-grantee for two districts that were not previously able to offer a preschool program. In one, the preschool students have been swiftly integrated into the host elementary school, with teachers from the older grade levels interacting with preschool students and joining the classroom as guests to contribute to various units, such as a clothes study. The principal has become particularly engaged, joining the students for music and movement on a regular basis.

Several of our Sub-grantees have additionally shared compelling stories of the successes of individual students and families in their programs during this first year, confirming that the Preschool Development Grant has had a meaningful and tangible impact on the lives of children:

“At our program, (a parent) expressed how grateful she is for this program becoming a part of her family. Her child being in this program has allowed her to continue employment, and pay off a balance owed to the college she was attending and more importantly get back on track with continuing her education to finish her degree.”
-- One Hope United

“One student had a severe behavior problem. He would arrive to school so angry that he would kick, punch and even bite. (After working with the parent educator and the student’s grandparents) he is now showing affection and working much better with his peers. He is also the first one to cheer on his friends with their various accomplishments.” -- Harvey School District #152

"I was working with a child who often went off by himself. He built a 'house' and he had placed many people outside the building. When I asked him what the people were doing. He responded 'These are bad guys.' I asked him why they were bad. He said 'they kill people.' I asked him if he could help them make a better choice that would not hurt anyone. He took my hand and led me to the choice cards that his teacher had been using to help the children learn to problem solve if they have a conflict with a friend. He flipped through each card, 'tell a teacher,' 'walk away,' 'take turns' etc. His teacher was amazed! She said 'I really never thought he had heard a single word I said!' -- Lighthouse Learning Center

Barriers and Lessons Learned

Illinois' first year of implementation has been a productive opportunity to explore and learn from the challenges and barriers facing programs in implementing a High-Quality Preschool Program serving our State's most at-risk children and families. Through our program support project, described above, and regular webinars and phone calls with programs, the State-level team has received consistent and candid feedback about issues as they have arisen, informing guidance and technical assistance offered to programs and the plan for continuous improvement in year two.

In general, barriers experienced by programs have clustered in the following key areas:

- *Workforce* - Illinois proudly exceeds the minimum teacher qualification requirements for a federally-defined High-Quality Preschool Program, requiring a professional educator license with an early childhood endorsement, above and beyond a Bachelor's degree. Many of our Sub-grantees additionally require teachers with bilingual or special education endorsements. Although Illinois has made great strides in improving our early childhood workforce in recent years, particularly through strategic investments made as a part of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), our expansion has increased the demand for a limited supply of highly-qualified teachers.
- *Social-Emotional Needs* - Illinois' Sub-grantees were successful, as described above, in reaching and enrolling significant numbers of the most at-risk children in the state. This success has brought additional challenges, however, particularly in three areas:
 - Educators and other program staff in some communities may have previously worked with a population of children that exhibited relatively lower levels of very high needs than those targeted by our PDG program. As a result, some have reported feeling unprepared to meet the higher and more complex needs of these children and families. We are working to address this by identifying opportunities to support social-emotional learning at the State level through capacity-building and supports.
 - Due to the half-day nature of many existing early childhood programs, particularly our state-funded Preschool for All program and many Head Start programs, many Sub-grantees chose to structure their PDG classrooms as separate and distinct from their current offerings. As a result, children with the highest social-emotional needs were often clustered together, creating a challenging environment. Based on the success of North Chicago and other communities in

blending funds to create mixed-age and mixed-income classroom groups, we are developing resources to support programs in considering alternate program structures that will address this issue. In addition, we will examine the success of our programs that effectively enhanced their Head Start classrooms with PDG funds, such as Mount Vernon SD 80, as these programs reported the fewest challenges in adapting to the expectations of the High-Quality Preschool Program.

- One of the key elements integrated into Illinois' PDG program model is embedded supports for child mental health. Although our programs successfully identified internal or contracted mental health resources, communities across our state lack the sustainable mental health supports that can serve as a continuous source of mental health care for those children and families who require it. We have encouraged programs to use their mental health consultants and staff as a bridge to services, where possible, but this lack of community services nonetheless presents a barrier to our goal of empowering families to build thriving futures.
- *Partnerships* - Although our Sub-grantees are all embedded and engaged in their communities, implementation of our PDG model requires a level of partnership and collaboration that is significantly above and beyond some current practices. In particular, some Sub-grantees experienced challenges in partnering with their local Head Start grantees in an active and continuous manner, amid concerns of competition for children. Sub-grantees who elected to subcontract a portion of their slot allocation to private and community-based entities struggled with the need for a significant mindset shift in viewing these entities as an extension of their program and in recognizing their accountability for these entities. The State has addressed these issues through guidance and resources designed to provide a clear pathway through these barriers.

Program Adjustments

In general, Illinois' approach to implementation of our Preschool Development Grant - Expansion Grant reflects the plan outlined in our initial application. Where there have been some minor adjustments to our plan, we have indicated these in our monthly Scope of Work. None of these changes will impact Illinois' attainment of performance targets and program goals for the duration of this project.

The most significant change in our project is reflected in our plan for Community Systems Development, described below as Competitive Preference Priority 2. While we began our approach with a structure based around regional boundaries, it was critical in our implementation process to obtain feedback from key stakeholders in communities across the State. This feedback has informed and refined our plan, leading us to approach this work as a comprehensive system of responsive and flexible State supports to communities.



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: IL PR/Award #: S419B150004

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 our first year of implementation, Illinois successfully served 3,110 eligible children in our high-quality preschool program. Although the State did not meet its initial target of 3,200 children, this enrollment level represents an increase of 6.9% of the total eligible children who are now being served by early education programs in our target communities and 97% of the State Goal for Year One.

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.

Of the 3,110 children served by the High-Quality Preschool Programs in Illinois, 10.4% were children with special needs who received Part B services. This exceeds the current national percentage of four-year-old children receiving Part B services. Illinois is still finalizing analysis of statewide data for children receiving Part B services and will use this information to inform planning for supports offered to communities to ensure continuous improvement in the number of children with special needs participating in the Preschool Development Grant-funded program.

In particular, the State will closely examine best practices from programs with high levels of success in serving a significant and robust population of children with special needs. In McLean County, 29.7% of children and in Valley View CUSD 365, 29.4% of the children served received Part B services.

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

Illinois' approach to the Preschool Development (PDG) Grant has been to build upon the State's Preschool for All (PFA) programs with some noteworthy enhancements. Through PFA, the State allows each grantee to determine eligibility within certain parameters. In designing eligibility criteria for the Preschool Development Grant-funded program, the State took up the challenge of developing a more uniform policy. Above and beyond the overarching goal of expanding access for children from families at or below 200% of FPL, the State sought to ensure that these new slots were targeted to children who are at the greatest risk of school failure, as these children are disproportionately underrepresented in our early childhood system, yet represent the greatest opportunity to close the achievement gap.

Illinois drew upon the expertise of public and private leaders in the state to identify key risk factors that have been demonstrated by research to have the greatest impact on future school success. The result of this effort was creation of a weighted eligibility form, which assigned point values to risk factors and is required for PDG-funded slots. Four factors - families in deep poverty (less than 50% of FPL), children with IEPs, children experiencing homelessness and children involved in the child welfare system - were assigned the highest values and prioritized for immediate enrollment. Additional factors were assigned half as many points. Programs are permitted to serve any children from families with incomes at or below 200% of FPL, as long as enrollment is prioritized according to the weighted eligibility system.

In order to facilitate appropriate use of this guidance to support an increase in the most at-risk Eligible Children served by the program, program administrators were trained and supported in use of a standardized process for selecting children. Rather than immediately enrolling children who met the minimum requirements, programs were required to recruit widely, with an emphasis on the priority populations, place children on a waiting list, prioritize and select children based on eligibility points and enroll the most at-risk children from that process. Programs were further encouraged to leverage community partnerships with Head Start grantees, community-based early childhood centers and other high-quality programs to ensure that families of children placed on a waiting list could access other appropriate options.

Through our program support project, described below, program administrators received assistance in developing robust systems to support active recruitment of the most at-risk children and families in their communities. Program support specialists, consultants selected for their expertise in early childhood administration and systems, were assigned to each program to support problem resolution and comprehensive local system building. This support included assisting programs in establishing active referral partnerships with community organizations and providers.

A key component of increasing the number and percentage of children with high needs served by our program was the building of a multifaceted pipeline between and across systems and providers. The State has developed 11 geographically based Innovation Zones. In these zones, early learning and development programs are working collaboratively to plan for and implement local cross-system strategies towards the goal of enrolling children with highest needs in a continuum of high quality early learning and development programs. Each of the 11 Zones was selected based on demonstrated need as well as capacity to plan for and implement cross-system strategies. Innovation Zone teams in each community receive support in the forms of technical assistance, coaching, training, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. All of these communities, with the exception of Williamson County, were selected as target communities for our first year of implementation for the Preschool Development Grant

- Aurora (small city (urban/suburban) in northern part of state)
- Greater East St. Louis (south central urban/suburban)
- Cicero (densely populated suburb of Chicago)

- Thornton Township (south suburbs of Chicago)
- North Lawndale (neighborhood in City of Chicago)
- Williamson County (southern Illinois, largely rural)
- Pilsen/Little Village (City of Chicago neighborhood)
- Austin (neighborhood in the City of Chicago)
- Southside cluster (three neighborhoods in the City of Chicago)
- Elgin (small city in northern part of state)
- Altgeld-Riverdale (City of Chicago housing project and immediate neighborhood)

Each of the Innovation Zones focus on one or more strategies identified in their local community, such as universal screening, coordinated intake, and/or increasing the enrollment of high-need children in quality early learning programs. Most also implement related initiatives to increase the quality of early learning programs in their community. Preschool Development Grant-funded programs were expected to participate and engage fully in their community's Innovation Zone.

These Zones played a critical role in supporting PDG Sub-grantees towards development of cross-system active referral pipelines of at-risk children into programs and of families towards critical community services. In the Aurora community, our four PDG programs - West Aurora SD 129, East Aurora SD 131, Indian Prairie SD 204 and One Hope United - were active participants in the efforts of the Innovation Zone to engage local community stakeholders towards a continuum of services. As a result of this collaborative and innovative partnership, these programs were connected to local agencies serving refugees, providing health and mental health services and other key pieces of the community social service infrastructure. In Lansing SD 158, strong community partnerships ensured that every family received needed assistance for the holidays, including clothing for children.

In Cicero, our Sub-grantee Through a Child's Eyes leveraged the work of the Innovation Zones to create "pop-up" preschools in the community to reach families who might otherwise not have learned of their high-quality preschool offerings. Parent ambassadors conducted comprehensive outreach to families through door-to-door contact, visits to WIC offices and other locations that offer opportunities to reach families who are linguistically isolated and living in deep poverty. These ambassadors helped families learn about and participate in the traveling "pop-up" preschool, a drop-in early education experience offered at five community locations in high-need areas. Over 256 families participated in these events, which served as a bridge to help families become more comfortable with and eventually enroll in PDG and other high-quality early education options.

At the State level, direct connections were made between program administrators and other systems serving at-risk children and families. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the State's child welfare agency, operates a School Readiness Office which is charged with ensuring that children in the child welfare system are placed in high-quality early learning programs. Program administrators were directly connected to the DCFS school readiness liaison for their region to develop a strong relationship that will facilitate higher enrollment of children involved in this system on an ongoing basis.

In addition, the State's regional McKinney-Vento liaisons engaged with administrators to provide support in conducting innovative outreach to families experiencing homelessness and to support programs in meeting their needs once enrolled. As a result of this connection, 34% of the children being served by our program in Rockford Public Schools were classified as homeless and the program's efforts were featured in an HHS newsletter earlier this year.

Illinois' demographic data from the 2015-2016 program year indicates significant progress in serving higher numbers of eligible children, as well as opportunities for continued improvement in year two. By serving 3,110 children in our High-Quality Preschool Program in year one, the State has increased the percentage of eligible

four-year-old children served by 6.9%. In addition, significant numbers of the children served by the program are from the State's identified priority areas, designed to ensure recruitment of the most at-risk children and families. Of the children served in the first year, 5.1% were children experiencing homelessness, 6% were children involved in the child welfare system, 9% were from families below 50% of the federal poverty limits and 10.4% were children with IEPs.

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 State's initial application in 2014, Illinois reported 13,789 four-year-old children served by the state-funded Preschool for All program in the targeted communities. As of December 2015, Sub-grantees in the targeted communities have served 14,670 four-year-old children, an increase of 881 children. This significant increase was supported by Illinois' investment of an additional \$25 million in the Early Childhood Block Grant for State fiscal year 2016, in support of our matching funds commitment for the Preschool Development Grant.

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.

Illinois' tool for measuring school readiness is the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS). KIDS looks at children's development across the five Essential Domains of School Readiness and is made up of eleven domains: Self-Regulation; Social and Emotional Development; Language and Literacy Development; Cognition: Math; Cognition: Science; Physical Development; Health; History - Social Science; Visual and Performing Arts; English Language Development (ELD); and Language and Literacy Development in Spanish (SLD). The focus of each domain is on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or behaviors that reflect each domain's developmental constructs. KIDS is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) which establishes Illinois' expectations for what children should know and be able to do upon kindergarten entry.

The current scope of school readiness data collection does not cover entire domains, but does include measures from the domains of Language and Literacy Development, Cognitive Math Development, Social Emotional Development, and Approaches to Learning. Information about the revised implementation plan and the process for determining the revised plan are described below.

KIDS is an observation-based assessment tool that is completed by each child's teacher during the first 40 days of school enrollment in kindergarten. It is based on developmental research and theory, includes developmental sequences of behaviors along a continuum, and spans the development trajectories of children in kindergarten. The data from KIDS is entered into KIDStech which is a server-based computer support system for the KIDS instrument. Illinois has mandated that every kindergarten student in a public school setting must be assessed for school readiness beginning in school year 2017-2018.

Once teachers have identified and entered the level for each required measure into the KIDSTech data reporting system, the system will produce psychometrically valid and reliable reports that teachers and administrators can access for individual children, classrooms, or the entire school. Reports can be shared with parents and explained. In addition, once data are reported, they will become part of the student's longitudinal data record. That means the school and the state will have aggregated data that will be able to look at the overall experiences and pathways to students successfully achieving college and career readiness. Reports can be generated by individual domains, teacher, classroom, school, and/or subgroups including gender, ethnicity, English Learners, children with IEPs. The reports are being used to get to know developmental competencies of children in their classroom, for curriculum planning for individual children and groups of children, for parent-teacher conferences, and to support continuous program improvement efforts by teacher and principal

Illinois began the pilot stage of KIDS implementation during the 2012-13 school year and has continued with phased implementation. Teacher and administrator feedback from the pilot and phased implementation has been utilized to customize, restructure and simplify the KIDS instrument, training and implementation process. School district feedback has been collected through surveys, focus groups, and from program coaches. The 2016-17 school year will provide another year of training and preparation with statewide implementation scheduled for the 2017-18 school year.

The KIDS instrument, as well as all KIDS trainings, coaches and resources are provided by the state to districts at no cost. Teachers implementing KIDS attend a two-day training to learn how to gather evidence for and complete the assessment, use the results to inform planning curriculum, and share results with parents. Administrators are also invited to attend the two-day training, or attend a half-day training specifically for administrators. Once teachers have attended the training, further support is offered through regional coaches, resources provided on the illinoiskids.org website, and separate trainings for additional staff members.

Illinois contracted with WestEd to develop an online system through which teachers can establish and maintain reliability in administering KIDS. This system was developed, pilot tested and completed in 2015.

As of December 2015, 3,778 kindergarten teachers and 1,131 School Administrators participated in the two-day training on KIDS implementation. There are an additional 1,288 School Administrators that participated in the KIDS half-day Administrator training and 158 individuals who have completed KIDS coach training. There were 188 school districts (595 schools) that used KIDS in Fall 2015 and completed the KIDS assessment on 16,854 kindergarten students. The districts participating are geographically diverse and together represent the ethnic and economic diversity of the state.

At the September 2015 board meeting, the ISBE board approved an amendment to the ISBE Goal 1 in the Illinois State Board of Education Strategic Plan, which included as the first part of the goal, "Every child in each public school system in the State of Illinois deserves to attend a school system wherein 1) all kindergartners are assessed for readiness." In furtherance of this goal, and in response to

continued concerns from some school districts about the feasibility of implementing KIDS, the KIDS Advisory Committee was charged with further reducing the time burden of reporting school readiness data to ISBE while ensuring that all kindergartners are assessed for readiness. In November 2015, the Committee made recommendations, based on a developmental research review conducted by WestEd, to collect data at the beginning of the school year on 14 high-impact measures for all kindergartners. This is a shift from current requirements, which include data collection at three points in time on multiple domains. Agency staff are currently getting feedback on this plan from school districts and will initiate rulemaking accordingly.

The new plan for collecting kindergarten readiness data requires less information to be reported by school districts, builds off of information collected through local assessment systems and instructional practices, and continues to provide the state with a summative snapshot of the readiness of kindergartners across the state. School readiness information is an important part of the educational continuum. School readiness data will inform programs, services, and policies to improve early learning outcomes and ensure that more children are arriving to kindergarten ready to succeed and eager to learn. This will also help identify and target readiness gaps that may exist across or within communities and to ensure quality and equity for each and every child.

All Districts will report to ISBE on 14 measures of school readiness in the fall for each kindergartner, beginning in 2017-2018. Data for each student, based on local instruction and assessment practices, will be reported through the KIDSTech rating system. Districts looking to use KIDS to monitor progress and growth can continue to collect and enter data during the winter and spring reporting periods. While the 55 measures and 11 domains of the full instrument continue to be available to schools at no cost, only the 14 key measures will be required to be reported. These measures were selected because they provide information about unique and important aspects of behavior that are predictive (based on empirical research) of kindergarten readiness and later academic success. Data will not be required statewide until 2017-18, providing districts with additional time to plan and train teachers. Districts currently using KIDS may continue to do so.

There will also be a process implemented for determining KIDS 'criterion-zone boundaries' for readiness. The purpose of this process is to define regions along the scales of measurement of the various KIDS domains that are associated with children meeting Illinois standards of readiness, both at the beginning and end of kindergarten. This is to address the question of how KIDS' results relate to standards-based expectations for children's readiness, at the beginning of kindergarten and at the end of kindergarten.

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.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the central portion of the page. It is intended for the user to enter data related to the performance measure described above.

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.

During year one of implementation, Illinois invested funding strategically in several infrastructure areas to support quality. These initiatives align closely with the State's plan as indicated in the application for initial funding.

Program Support

In partnership with the Early Childhood Center for Professional Development at The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning (ECCPD), the State created a program support project that provides program-level technical assistance and administrative staff training. This approach addresses our plans to provide comprehensive professional development and supports to implement comprehensive services and to strengthen implementation.

Incorporated within this project are two primary components: a Program Support Specialist assigned to each program to support administrators in building strong systems to support quality and; resource materials specifically addressing the needs of our Preschool Expansion programs and the development of training opportunities.

Compliance Monitoring

We expanded the State's existing monitoring contract with National Louis University's McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) to provide compliance monitoring of programs using an expanded Compliance Checklist (detailed in the next section) and classroom environment quality monitoring using the ECERS-R tool. Expanding this contract included the hiring of additional assessors and training of the assessor cadre in the new High-Quality Preschool Program elements and the State's indicators for measurement of compliance.

The assessors go out on visits with either the state anchor, who is 90% or above reliable with the authors, or a lead assessor who has been 90 % reliable with the anchor. These reliability visits take place either every six or eight assessments depending on the experience of the assessor (every six for newer assessors and eight for senior assessors). NLU maintains a reliability spreadsheet on everyone that is monitored by their supervisor.

Supports for Excellence in Inclusive Practice

In addition, the State expanded a partnership with Early Choices, an initiative of the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County which provides professional development and technical assistance to early childhood programs on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments. This collaboration supports technical assistance including the use of a new classroom tool, the Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP), to assess quality

indicators applicable to all children, helping programs increase the standards of early childhood programs for all children to succeed. Early Choices works with programs to increase program capacity for serving all children, as well as continued quality improvement. Through training and coaching, programs engage with staff to increase their knowledge of best practices and work to implement those practices. This process includes systems integration, including recruitment, to ensure that programs are equipped to reach and serve children with special needs.

Technical assistance also supports programs working towards an Award of Excellence (Tier 5 of the State's TQRIS, ExceleRate Illinois) focused on the quality of instruction and collaborative systems at the program level and classroom level for children with Special Needs. This Award acknowledges exceptional programming for children with special needs.

In 2015, 11 Illinois programs successfully attained an Award of Excellence for the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs. An additional 34 programs began working towards this Award in 2015 and more are expected to join this cohort in 2016, with a strong emphasis on programs participating in the Preschool Development Grant.

Birth to Third Grade Continuum

The State additionally partnered with Illinois State University (ISU) to establish a comprehensive system of supports for the birth to third grade alignment component of our project. This project launched in spring 2015 with an open invitation for PDG communities to apply as participants in our inaugural B-3 cohort. Seven communities - Rockford, Dolton, Metro East, McLean County, Elgin, North Chicago and Chicago - were selected and participated in an initial summer institute to begin developing a work plan for the next two years to move towards ambitious and achievable B-3 alignment goals.

To lead this work going forward, ISU hired a B-3 Continuity Director in the last quarter of 2015. The director's prior experience leading a local alignment project between an early learning system and a charter elementary school system will support the needs of Illinois communities to successfully pursue this work.

As a part of Illinois' system of State supports to communities, the birth to third grade alignment project is designed to provide individualized support to communities towards their needs and goals. Beyond the first institute, communities have received individual site visits from the continuity director and staff from ISBE, ISU and OECD. These visits have three primary goals:

- Assisting communities in identifying the stakeholders who should be a part of their B-3 team.

- Learning more about the existing collaborations in the community and determining if one of these collaborations are an appropriate "home" for the B-3 community work.

- Supporting communities in assessing the existing work taking place, identifying primary areas of need and establishing a plan to move forward.

With these site visits completed, communities will receive support from the State in the form of technical assistance, access to relevant resources, regional meetings, support facilitating community meetings, connection to national experts, webinars on B-3 alignment components and peer exchanges. Other forms of support will be provided as needed to the extent that resources will permit. ISBE, ISU and OECD are committed to ensuring that communities are successful in implementing significant and sustainable alignment activities in one of Illinois' eight core elements for B-3 alignment:

1. **Family engagement:** schools and engaged families partner in children's formal education such as school-parent communication about school programs and students' progress, involving parents in school decision-making and school-community collaborations
2. **Transitions:** increased access to early childhood programs and smooth transitions that focus on the continuum provided to each child and sustain gains into the early grades
3. **Data-driven improvement:** using meaningful child-based assessments and program data to drive instruction, identify achievement gaps, allocate resources, and determine areas for professional development
4. **Professional development:** to ensure highly-effective teaching staff whose professional development is

aligned from birth through third grade and is grounded in child development and effective instructional practices

5. **Curriculum and instruction:** to represent a coherent system with shared expectations for student growth and a focus on both academic and social-emotional skills, support a wide range of development, and are reflective of children's families and cultures

6. **Assessments:** sharing assessment practices and data across the full early childhood continuum with particular focus on the implementation of the KIDS

7. **Comprehensive services:** including assistance in obtaining health, mental health and dental services, nutrition services and education, and linkages to other community services

8. **Community partnerships:** to strengthen education, supports and services for children and families from early childhood programs into early elementary settings

Although the first cohort of B-3 alignment communities are still developing their plans and assembling stakeholder teams, several communities have made initial progress in identifying key problems to address and existing structures and systems to build from. In North Chicago, the mayor attended the B-3 site visit and has directed his staff to connect the B-3 alignment project to the citywide work taking place with the federal My Brother's Keeper initiative. Rockford has identified a focus on data-driven improvement, with a goal of tracking outcomes for children from early learning programs across the community to better target shared professional development. In Elgin, the school district is drawing on early childhood best practices to develop a play-based curriculum for kindergarten.

State-Level Staff

The Preschool Development Grant is managed through the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), which also manages the MIECHV and RTT-ELC grants. In Spring 2015, OECD hired the Preschool Expansion Policy Director to manage implementation and federal grant compliance and to support the State's strategy to use the Preschool Development Grant as a catalyst to strengthen the ability of our state-funded preschool program to support the most at-risk young learners. This individual works in close collaboration with staff at the Illinois State Board of Education, fiscal agent for the PDG grant and administrator of the Early Childhood Block Grant, which funds Preschool for All programs.

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

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

- High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;

- High-quality professional development for all staff;

- A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications;
- A Full-Day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- Evidence-based health and safety standards.

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

Illinois developed a robust program model for our Preschool Expansion that builds upon and leverages the high-quality structure of our existing state-funded Preschool for All (PFA) program. Preschool for All requirements on teacher qualifications, class size, professional development and curricular alignment to the Early Learning Standards meet or exceed the required elements of a High-Quality Preschool Program.

In order to meet all twelve elements, Illinois established an addendum to its PFA compliance checklist with twenty additional items, which clearly define the requirements for Illinois' Preschool Development Grant-funded programs to comply with the expectations of High-Quality Preschool Programs. Each program's contract requires compliance with all twelve structural elements during the first year of implementation. Evidence of this compliance will be measured during comprehensive monitoring visits, scheduled to occur during the current program year (school year 2015-16). Our focus in designing this compliance system, as well as the supports offered to programs, is on administrative capacity and the development of sustainable, written policies and procedures within programs.

All PDG-funded programs are required to offer a full day program that offers a day and year that are at least equal in length to a first grade classroom in the local school district. Instructional staff salaries in all settings must be indexed to the local district salary scale for a first grade teacher. In addition, Illinois required programs to hire and support a dedicated instructional leader at a maximum ratio of one per ten classrooms. Existing requirements for Preschool for All require a maximum ratio of ten children per instructional staff member, a maximum class size of twenty and rigorous requirements for a licensed teacher in each classroom.

Comprehensive services to families are a major emphasis of Illinois' PDG program model. Programs were required to hire a parent educator at a maximum ratio of one per 100 children. These parent educators serve a dedicated family support and engagement function and support the development of community partnerships for the benefit of families. Successful implementation of comprehensive services for families in our model incorporate each of the following components:

- Ensuring that each family has a medical and dental home.
- Ensuring that each child has a medical, dental and social-emotional screening.
- Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the needs of each family and assist families in setting and achieving ambitious goals.
- Actively referring families to community resources through established relationships and clearly defined referral processes.
- Offering a variety of opportunities for parents to learn from experts in the areas of child health, mental wellness and family strengthening, based on parent needs and interests.
- Engaging parents as active leaders in operation and improvement of the program as members of a parent advisory council.

Programs received sample job descriptions to support their understanding of the parent educator and instructional leader staff roles. These descriptions included key activities that are expected of each role to support program compliance and quality. In addition, professional development activities at a state level have targeted each role. A partnership between the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership is empowering instructional leaders through a professional development project called Lead, Learn, Excel. This 16-month process supports instructional leaders in building the systems and structures within their programs to transfer knowledge to practice by implementing sustainable, job-embedded

professional learning routines with their teachers. In 2015, Lead, Learn, Excel was engaged with more than 300 instructional leaders, representing 170 programs, in ten active cohorts around the state, including leaders from Preschool Development Grant-funded programs. Parent educators received targeted professional development workshops offered by The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning.

Finally, the State has set a high standard for inclusion of children with special needs in programs. Programs are required to develop a recruitment strategy for targeting children with special needs for enrollment. A written process for referral and assessment of children with suspected special needs is required for each program, including the comprehensive services and support offered to families throughout the process. Active collaborations with the Early Intervention (Part C) system are expected.

Our partnership with Early Choices, detailed above, is a key part of Illinois' strategy to support high-quality inclusive practices at a program level and at a classroom level.

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.

Illinois based the estimated cost per slot for children served in our Preschool Development Grant-funded program on a cost model carefully designed to reflect the full costs of implementing a High-Quality Preschool Program. As a result, there has been relatively little change between our projected costs and the actual average costs per slot for new and enhanced slots.

In our initial application, the State projected an average cost of \$8,200 per new slot and \$4,400 per new slot enhanced by Head Start. These costs average to a \$6,300 per slot cost for all new slots, which is slightly higher than our actual average cost per slot of \$6,021. This average was determined by prorating costs based on the number of each type of slot that was created. In addition, the State projected an average cost of \$5,100 per slot for enhancement of state-funded Preschool for All slots. Our actual costs per slot for this enhancement were \$5,224 per slot. These costs are within a reasonable margin of our initial projections.

One significant change in our cost model for the Preschool Development Grant from our original application is in regards to enhancement of programs serving children through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Through collaborative assessment and planning with those grantees initially funded based on their use of CCAP funds, we determined that the State's goal of reaching the most at-risk children and families would be adversely effected by a requirement for families to simultaneously meet CCAP education or employment requirements.

High unemployment affects many of the target regions of Illinois, exacerbating the rates of child poverty. In East St. Louis, the unemployment rate at the end of 2015 was 11.6%, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Limiting enrollment of children in PDG-funded programs in these areas based on parent employment would have created a barrier to enrollment of many of our most at-risk children from our priority populations. As a result, adjustments were made to the allocations for those grantees to provide a level of resources closer to that provided for new slots without additional funding streams. At the same time, guidance was provided to grantees that enrollment in PDG must be based solely on the weighted eligibility criteria and must not be based on eligibility for CCAP.

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.

Illinois is committed to a collaborative program model that relies upon a strong foundation of relationships between the State and our Sub-grantees and between those Sub-grantees and their communities. During our first year of implementation of this Preschool Development Grant, the State has invested key resources to support this model in each Sub-grantee program and community. A publicly-accessible website, housed by the Illinois State Board of Education, provides instant access to resources, policies and guidance for program administrators and staff (<http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/pdg-eg-grants.htm>).

Support for Strong Program Systems and Administrative Capacity

A key part of this strategy is professional development and technical assistance to programs towards the goal of supporting development of administrative capacity and strong program systems for compliance and quality. Through a partnership with the Early Childhood Center for Professional Development (ECCPD), housed at The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, Illinois established a program support initiative consisting of two components: program support specialists assigned to Sub-grantees and targeted professional development supports for program administrators.

Five program support specialists were recruited and hired by ECCPD to work individually with program Sub-grantees in their efforts to develop strong and sustainable systems. These specialists were selected based on knowledge and experience related to one or more of the following component areas:

- Recruitment of hard-to-reach families
- Comprehensive services, including health, mental health and family support
- Education and instructional leadership
- Parent engagement and involvement
- Program design and management

After intensive training on the State's goals and plan, the twelve elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs and the State's specific requirements for compliance and quality, these specialists were assigned to a caseload of approximately five Sub-grantees each. During the fall and early winter, specialists met with the administrative team at each Sub-grantee - generally consisting of a program administrator or principal, the instructional leader and the parent educator - to assess their progress in building strong systems and develop a plan to provide support for any areas of unmet need.

In this first year, all specialists successfully completed at least one visit to each Sub-grantee and assisted programs in identifying their current level of compliance and gaps in their systems. Specialists additionally provided intentional in-person and virtual follow-up, supporting programs in resolving recruitment challenges, developing systems for assessing and meeting the needs of families, helping programs connect to community resources and meeting other individual programmatic needs. Specialists regularly communicated with staff from ISBE and OECD to share concerns identified in the field, closing the feedback loop and ensuring that state-level administrators developed guidance and offered resources to address current needs.

In addition, specialist contact with programs has informed the second path of support offered by the State in conjunction with ECCPD. ECCPD is conducting a gap analysis of existing professional development offerings and

relevant resources, with a goal of developing tailored and comprehensive professional development to Sub-grantees. Feedback from specialists directly supports the development of these offerings. A particular emphasis has been placed on resources for parent educators and supports to programs in the area of comprehensive services.

Support for Community Collaboration

The State has developed guidance materials and templates to support our Sub-grantees in developing and maintaining strong partnerships. Sample templates for memoranda of understanding between PDG Sub-grantees and health providers, family strengthening organizations, social service agencies and other key community partners have served as a foundation for active, two-way referral and collaborative relationships. As noted above, Innovation Zones launched by the State have played a key role in facilitating these ongoing relationships in specific communities.

In addition, the State has provided support to Sub-grantees that have elected to subcontract with community-based early learning providers. To ensure consistency of program delivery across settings, we have directed Sub-grantees to develop systems and procedures that function across sites and settings and are unified at the program level, rather than individual to each site. Guidance to programs supports these entities in developing clear, written agreements with community-based subcontractors and establishing intentional plans for monitoring of compliance and quality.

The result of this work has been an increased mutual recognition of the important role of both the school district and the community-based early childhood centers and a spirit of innovation and collaborative problem-solving to meet the needs of children and families. A number of these partnerships serve south suburban region of Chicago, with the Innovation Zone in this community supporting Dolton SD 149 and Dolton-Riverdale SD 148 and their subcontracted early childhood centers in negotiating this challenging, new relationship. These partners have used their nascent collaboration to engage local community partners and reach the most at-risk children and families across a larger portion of their community. West Chicago SD 33 built upon and enhanced an existing partnership with one early childhood center, drawing upon those lessons to add a second partners.

Similarly, a partnership between Posen-Robbins SD 143.5 and the neighboring Harvey school district has used the Preschool Development Grant to improve parent awareness and education about the importance and availability of high-quality early childhood programming. In Wheaton, our sub-grantee Metropolitan Family Services has partnered with a school district to place classrooms in school district buildings. Although this is a unique arrangement among all of our grantees, a commitment to partnership between the district and Metropolitan has ensured that staff members from each entity work in close alignment to recruit and screen children, provide leadership to instructional staff and connect the work of the Preschool Development Grant-funded program to the services and structures of the district.

As needed, OECD and ISBE staff members have directly facilitated connections between programs and key community stakeholders to support a stronger relationship. In several communities, the State has engaged with the Head Start Collaboration Office and Illinois Head Start Association to help resolve barriers to partnership between PDG Sub-grantees and local Head Start grantees. These statewide Head Start groups additionally provided critical input into a sample memorandum of understanding template specifically for PDG and Head Start collaboration, building a strong framework for active, sustainable relationships.

Engagement with State Systems

Finally, Sub-grantees were connected to state systems serving the most vulnerable children and families. Direct connections were facilitated by ISBE and OECD to the School Readiness Office of the State's child welfare agency, DCFS, as well as the regional system of McKinney-Vento liaisons supporting families experiencing homelessness. The goal of these connections is directly related to the State's priority eligibility criteria to increase the percentage of children involved in the child welfare system or experiencing homelessness that are able to access high-quality, full-day preschool programs.

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).

As noted above, the State has partnered with Illinois State University (ISU) to implement our plan to support community-level coordination and alignment of systems and services for children and families from birth to third grade. This work is now underway, with seven communities -- Rockford, Dolton, Metro East, McLean County, Elgin, North Chicago and Chicago - taking part in a summer institute in mid-June of 2015. This work is led by our grantees in those communities - Rockford Public Schools SD 205, City of Rockford Head Start, Dolton SD 149, Lighthouse Learning Center, McLean County USD 5, Elgin U-46, North Chicago SD 187 and Chicago Public Schools. Our work in the first year of implementation has focused in three key areas:

Establishment of a State-Level Team

Although implementation of the State's B-3 work is housed at ISU, a broader state-level team has been convened to plan and implement a clear strategy in support of Illinois' goals as indicated in our proposal. Members of the team include representation from the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University, Illinois State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. This team convenes twice monthly to assess progress and plan next steps. In late 2015, the team was joined by a B-3 Continuity Director, who is charged with leading day-to-day project implementation.

Implementation of a Summer Institute

During June 2015, the seven selected communities assembled an initial group of 6-7 stakeholders each and participated in a three day summer institute in Bloomington, Illinois. This Institute had three primary goals:

- Support and expand knowledge of developmentally appropriate educational practices across the Birth through Third Grade continuum with a focus on **sustainable and cost-effective implementation** that involves leveraging resources among schools and the community to build a continuum of high-quality early learning environments.
- Enhance early childhood educators' and community members' understanding of the structure and culture of elementary schools and enhance elementary school educators' understanding of the structure and culture of early childhood education and community support systems by **increasing alignment** within and across communities and school districts to best support children and families.
- Assist Institute participants with understanding state efforts to define and support the local creation of **coherent local pathways** from prekindergarten programs into the early elementary grades in their communities.

Communities received a comprehensive self-assessment tool as a support to begin their community-level planning for this work.

Supports for Community Planning

Following the first summer institute in June, the state-level team has provided supports to communities to assist them in developing local stakeholder groups to lead this work and begin prioritizing goals and tasks. Communities were encouraged to look broadly at their existing collaborations and systems and identify potential stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to B-3 alignment at the community level, engaging the school district, community-based and private early learning centers, Head Start grantees, social service

agencies, philanthropy groups and other key entities. A suggested group of stakeholders included:

- Superintendent/assistant superintendent or other high-level district administrator with decision-making authority
- School board members
- Head Start directors
- Elementary school principals
- Early childhood center directors
- District early childhood coordinator
- Innovation Zone coordinator/coordinators of other local early childhood collaborations
- Home visiting program coordinators
- Teachers (Birth-3rd grade)
- Local United Way staff
- Local municipal or community-based partner staff
- Parent leaders

Follow up site visits to each community began in late 2015, with a focus on learning about existing community alignment initiatives, confirming a stakeholder team and moving towards establishing concrete community goals as a first step in developing an alignment plan. Each community is moving towards implementation of these elements on an individual timetable based on the status of their existing collaboration and the amount of prior work that had taken place. At the end of year one, these communities had not yet begun to implement their initiatives, but each has developed an important foundation to support this work.

The B-3 Continuity Director is charged with meeting and supporting each community and their stakeholder teams on an ongoing basis. In addition, this individual provides the technical assistance and support referenced above, using a consultative approach to guide community assessment and support the stakeholder team in defining their focus and goals. The director will additionally develop and assemble resources representing current research, best practices and other topics that directly support the needs of communities.

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*.

Despite budgetary challenges during the State's 2016 fiscal year (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016), Illinois has continued to prioritize early education as a critical investment. The education budget for FY2016 included a \$25 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports Illinois' state-funded Preschool for All and birth to three Prevention Initiative programs. Of this increase, \$332,922 supported the PDG-funded program, meeting the State's commitment for this competitive preference priority.

In addition, our sub-grantees have actively enlisted strong support from their local communities, reporting \$1,121,262 in local and other funding that will directly support their programs this year. As a result of these investments, the State is on track with our credible plan for supporting our plan through non-Federal matching funds.

Future non-Federal matching funds will be used in accordance with the approved State plan to increase the number of PDG-model slots available to Illinois' most at-risk young children. These funds, once appropriated by the State's General Assembly, would be made available to programs through a competitive RFP process. Any new PDG-implementing Sub-grantees identified through that process would receive resources and supports for planning and implementation to ensure compliance and quality.

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.

Community Systems Development

In 2014, RTT-ELC funds supported the development of a State Strategic Plan for Community Systems Development. From the fall of 2014 through the spring of 2015, state agency representatives, along with state leads from current community systems initiatives and co-chairs of the Early Learning Council's Community Systems Development Subcommittee, fleshed out an action plan based on the state plan. With consensus around the critical need for local collaboration, the proposal was that a **network of regional hubs** was the most feasible structure for promoting and supporting local community collaborations in their important role by working across child and family serving systems to:

- **Build the capacity of community collaborations** and regional system actors to:
 - develop robust “pipelines” to link children with high needs to effective early childhood services
 - coordinate existing services to maximize impact
 - strategically plan for needed expansion of services
 - meaningfully engage families in the development of systems and services
- **Build readiness to respond to opportunities** to expand and enhance early childhood programs
- **Through regional councils, involve regional-level partners** in planning for and implementing collective impact strategies

- **Serve as a feedback loop** between communities and state leaders to align system as well as inform policy and effective implementation of programs
- **Inspire greater public awareness and engagement**, including development of parent and local leadership

The framework for this ambitious State Plan was included in Illinois' application for the Preschool Development Grant. In the summer of 2015, OECD held a series of "Community Systems Development Listening Sessions" in East St. Louis, Marion, Moline, Aurora, Chicago, and Rockford to collect feedback from community collaborations. In these sessions, concerns were raised about regional councils and boundaries as well as cost and sustainability, specifically:

- 1. Regional boundaries:** Communities expressed strongly that they did not want yet another set of boundaries to deal with; they preferred to choose which communities with which to partner, rather than to have artificially-imposed boundaries.
- 2. Hubs and councils:** While these were intended to serve as opportunities to link sectors together, many stakeholders felt that the idea of a physical hub as well as the regional council presented an additional layer of bureaucracy, as well as an unwanted additional layer of administration and directives.
- 3. Cost and sustainability:** The Listening Sessions were held during a time of substantial state budget uncertainty (which continues today). As a result, communities expressed that any financial resources should be invested in programs and the local collaborations directly (many of which were experiencing severe budget limitations) rather than an untested regional system.

In response to that feedback as well as leadership changes at the state level, OECD and a core group of the Community Systems Development Subcommittee of the Early Learning Council have worked to modify the State Plan towards a more feasible and sustainable structure of state-level supports for effective community systems.

In 2016 the State will continue to work with state agency representatives to develop an operational and fiscal sustainability plan for providing state supports for community systems. In addition, the State will align our capacity-building supports for community collaborations (a process that began in 2015) and roll out these supports to a targeted subset of communities. Community-level data improvements are also underway, and a Subcommittee of the Early Learning Council will be recommending a process and infrastructure to include family engagement in state policy tables and discussion.

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.

In year one, Illinois budgeted approximately 94% of the State's federal grant award to support 3,200 new and expanded High Quality State Preschool slots. Of these, 2,460 new slots were created, representing 77% of all supported slots. Based on our cost model for the Preschool Development Grant, new slots are budgeted at an approximately 60% higher cost than expanded slots. Illinois has met and substantially exceeded the requirements of this priority item.

Slots were targeted to communities across the State with a significant gap between the number of high-quality preschool slots available and the number of 4-year old children living in poverty. Data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, which comprehensively tracks child population and early learning enrollment, was used

to select from applicant communities. The State's goal is to target early learning resources to the most at-risk children and families, providing the biggest lever to increasing school readiness.

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.

A revised State-level budget has been submitted with this report to reflect changes in the state's expenditure of funds to date and the plan for future expenditures. Funds not expended or obligated have been carried over in three areas:

- **Sub-recipients** - As noted in item four below, several Sub-recipients were awarded startup funds based on anticipated costs for state fiscal year 2015 (ended June 30, 2015) and expended at a lower level than expected. Illinois has requested to transfer those remaining funds into 2016 and will reobligate them to sub-recipients to support existing PDG slots.
- **Technical Assistance** - Illinois spent 2015 building our infrastructure for implementing the Preschool Development Grant and assessing our technical assistance needs to support continuous improvement. We are carrying unexpended funds from this line into 2016 to support identified and anticipated technical assistance needs and goals.
- **State-Level Infrastructure** - Illinois projected hiring dates for state-level personnel for early 2015 in our initial application. Due to unavoidable delays in hiring for these positions, we are moving forward unexpended funds into 2016 to support infrastructure and programmatic needs.

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).

In the revised state-level budget, Illinois has proposed adjustments reflecting changes in allocations to Sub-recipients and adjustments in state-level infrastructure costs. Subrecipient allocations have been adjusted to resolve discrepancies between initially projected costs and actual costs, as well as adjustments in the number of children served by some Sub-recipients. As noted above, some infrastructure costs have been adjusted to reflect unanticipated changes in hiring dates.

In addition, unexpended resources previously allocated to technical assistance have been rolled over to the year 2 budget. The State is exploring appropriate uses for these funds that will expand the capacity of State-level staff to develop sound policy and provide comprehensive supports for programs, based on identified needs.

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.

In our application, Illinois committed to an ambitious plan for increased funding for our state's Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports our state-funded preschool programs. During the 2015 program year, Illinois made significant progress towards this plan through an increase of \$25 million to our Early Childhood Block Grant in state fiscal year 2016.

Although the budgeting process is still underway for state fiscal year 2017, the Illinois State Board of Education has requested an increase of \$75 million for the Early Childhood Block Grant and the Governor advanced this request during his budget address. During fiscal year 2018, the Illinois State Board of Education will re-compete

early childhood funding, except for the statutory set-aside of funds to Chicago Public Schools. This re-competition will present an opportunity for high-need communities across the state to increase the number of children enrolled in High-Quality Preschool Programs.

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

The majority of Illinois' Sub-recipients were awarded initial startup funds during our state's fiscal year 2015, which ended on June 30, 2015. These funds were designated for hiring of key staff to support recruitment and program development, purchase of supplies and materials to prepare classroom, training and professional development for new staff and other appropriate expenses to ensure program readiness to serve students.

As these initial allocations were based on assumptions about supply and staff costs, several Sub-recipients expended these startup funds at a lower rate than initially anticipated. Those unexpended funds will be rolled over to federal fiscal year 2016 and re-obligated to Sub-recipients to directly support funded slots.