





# 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 #: S419B150023                      2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Project Title: Massachusetts Preschool Expansion Grant

4. Grantee Name: MA Department of Early Education and Care

5. Grantee Address: 51 Sleeper St.

City: Boston                      State: Massachusetts                      Zip: 02210

6. Project Director Name: Anita Moeller

Title: Director, Preschool Expansion Grant

Phone #: 617-988-2429                      Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_                      Fax #: 617-988-2451

Email Address: anita.moeller@state.ma.us

### 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	\$14,788,757.50	\$5,990,076.00
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: 07/1/2016                      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: MA

PR/Award #: S419B150023

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.

*“Thank you for not making me choose between child care and putting food on the table”*

- Parent in Lawrence, MA

## Overview of Progress:

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has experienced significant success in its first year of implementation of the Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG). Each day over 800 children currently enter a classroom and receive the high quality experiences required by the grant. Of these approximately 64 percent of the children are brand new to the system; children who, without the support this grant provides, would have entered kindergarten this September with no prior preschool experience. Local programs report that the focus on this population of children and families has energized their teaching staff; the results of their work are almost immediately apparent as children learn for the first time how to sit at circle time, to hear a new book, hold a pair of scissors, or make letters on a page.

The visible successes are many; 46 classrooms are in operation- each led by a teacher with a Bachelor's degree, paid a salary commensurate with those of the public schools, with ratios of 10:1, and class sizes of no more than 20. Each classroom offers full 8-hour per day and full year (12 month) programming with a designated curriculum, formative assessment system, and, in many programs, a coach supporting the teacher in his/her professional practice. Families are engaged and the individual health needs of children are being addressed via an emerging system of comprehensive services.

Not as easily visible, perhaps, but equally important, are the developments in the early education system that are occurring due to the development and implementation of PEG-funded activities. These are exemplified through progress being made in:

**Leadership.** EEC has committed to full implementation of the PEG program at the highest levels. A tour of newly opened classrooms in all 5 communities this past fall was attended by the Governor, Secretary of Education, Commissioner of Early Education and Care, members of the legislature, Superintendents, Principals and Executive Directors of partnering programs. EEC has assembled a team of talented individuals to implement the program and positioned the Director of the PEG program as a direct report to the Commissioner. The Board of Early Education and care is regularly updated on progress and an Advisory representing a true cross sector of the field is relied upon for guidance as well. In public testimony to the legislature this fall both the Commissioner and Secretary of Education highlighted PEG as an example of a model from which we expect to derive success. With all eyes on PEG, the expectations are high and the likelihood of success is, therefore, even higher.

**Research.** Abt Associates has been hired to perform a longitudinal study of the implementation, impacts and costs of the PEG program. Prior to their starting work, EEC began working with communities to ensure that their local plans for implementation were founded in an articulated theory of change that identified their goals and the manners in which PEG is expected to achieve them by shaping child outcomes. Abt Associates then entered the

picture and built upon this work by meeting with local partners and further articulating and updating their theories of change. In these ways EEC has not only begun the initial work of a longitudinal study but is also embedding a research mindset in the community-level thinking and planning for PEG outcomes.

**Family Engagement.** EEC supports a network of Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees with \$13.4M in resources designated to connect high needs families whose children are not enrolled in formal early education and care settings to alternative educational opportunities and resources. CFCEs reach and engage these families to offer them access to comprehensive services, educational programming, with a specific focus on literacy and child development, and opportunities for screening to identify potential delays. The overarching goal is to build the capacity of parents to support optimal development in their child. In addition, with the long wait list for financial assistance, CFCEs bridge some of the gap for families that, even after being identified, will not have immediate access to formal early education opportunities.

Every Preschool Expansion Grant community currently engages with local EEC-funded CFCEs and other community partners to conduct outreach and provide support to educators working with families enrolled in the community partner programs, with a particular focus on outreach strategies for hard-to-reach children and families, including those not currently served by early education and care programs. No additional funding is provided to the CFCEs from the PEG grant, as the CFCEs already support families in connecting with early education programs.

**Public-private partnerships.** The design of the PEG program in Massachusetts is based upon the principle that local communities know best what the children and families in their communities need. EEC structured the PEG program as a partnership between public schools (LEAs) and early learning providers (ELPs). While the LEAs are the sub-grantees with responsibility for distributing and monitoring grant funds, they are on equal ground with the ELPs when it comes to the design of the PEG model in each community. All design decisions have been made jointly and by consensus by local partners and all hold responsibility for ensuring that program goals are met. While partnership comes with inherent challenges the ultimate result has been the development of a common vision for the design and implementation of high quality preschool in each PEG community and the leveraging of resources to bring that vision to life.

Also key to PEG design in Massachusetts is the inclusion of partners that can build upon the success of their particular early education sectors in the design and implementation of PEG activities. By including public schools, Head Start programs, early education providers (including YMCA's, Community Action Agencies, non-profit and for-profit providers), EEC purposefully brought to the table agencies that represent this knowledge and are prepared to combine and build upon the best of each. Public schools bring a critical understanding of the elementary and secondary education system, Head Start brings over 50 years of experience with the involvement of families and provision of comprehensive services, early education programs know well the health and safety requirements of licensing and the quality criteria in the QRIS. Combined, the many talents, histories and perspectives on early education are coming together to create innovate partnerships and program design.

**Birth to Grade 3 Perspective.** The timing of the receipt of the PEG grant has been fortuitous in Massachusetts. As recipient of Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT-ELC) many partners across the Massachusetts early childhood spectrum are well positioned to support a birth to third grade initiative like the PEG opportunity. Inter-agency partnerships at the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, Elementary and Secondary Education, Higher Education and Children and Families are prepared to support this initiative as a continuation of the progress made via RTT-ELC. Similarly, federal partners at Region One of the Office of Head Start, the Head Start State Collaboration Office, the Office of Child Care and the technical assistance providers affiliated with each are all prepared to fully support this effort. Through RTT-ELC, EEC has developed partnerships with a focus on a birth to grade three mindset that is now prime to build upon via PEG. While year one of PEG has been primarily focused on the development of local partnerships, program design, outreach to families and program implementation the foundation is now in place both locally and with partners state-wide to support interagency birth to grade three approaches to learning.

**Monitoring.** It is imperative that the opportunities made available through this grant are both clearly understood and expertly implemented at all levels. EEC has committed to a multi-level system for monitoring of PEG activities that not only commits to partner with our colleagues in the field in a manner that brings the full support of EEC resources to this project but that also holds ourselves and our partners accountable in ensuring that it is the children, families and their preschool teachers that most directly benefit from the tremendous

opportunity that this grant represents.

**Funding.** EEC's budget is over 90 percent supported through federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds. Not only is the timing of PEG implementation supporting the development of policies that will guide subsidized child care funding in future years, it is inspiring administrative and legislative bodies to take a look at the potential that this grant represents. Only six months after receipt of the PEG grant, EEC received an increase of \$500k of new state dollars dedicated to planning for PEG-like expansion in communities across the state. While these funds are modest in size the interest in the model that they represent is substantial. By June of 2016 thirteen communities will have plans in place such that, if funding were to become available, they will be prepared to take the PEG model and begin implementation in their communities.

The first year of PEG implementation has not been without its challenges, and EEC is as committed to learning from areas where we struggle as a system as we are to learning from where we shine. Some key areas on which we are learning despite facing challenges include:

**Development of Local Systems for Collaboration and Coordination.** While ultimately highly successful, the development and support of local systems that combine a cross section of partners has not come easily at all times. At the most straightforward level, passing funds from federal to state, to municipal governments and then on to community based providers has required time, patience and the creation of some new local methods for collaboration. City governments, for example, were not accustomed to receiving and then providing a grant to a community based provider for services not yet rendered. Contracts were developed, school committee votes taken, and patience tested.

On a more subjective level, trust had to develop or, in some cases, be re-established among local partners. The long-standing fear among early educators that public schools are destined to put them out of the business of educating 4 year olds had to have a place to be aired. The resultant feelings of disappointment that public school staff were not always considered equal partners at the table also needed its place to be addressed. Budget decisions had to be made that reflected common priorities about the value of differing approaches to learning and to teacher support. Ultimately, the partnerships at the local level are strong but EEC is wise to acknowledge that this is due to the time allowed for the development of true partnership and collaboration.

**Enrollment.** On December 1, 2015 the MA PEG program, statewide, was not 100 percent enrolled. While some programs filled almost immediately, many took much longer than expected to fill the empty seats in their classrooms. EEC's decision to focus primarily on enrolling children that otherwise would have entered kindergarten without a preschool education proved to be a challenge. All involved learned that the outreach required to engage families defined as "hard to reach" needed to be individual and build on relationships that families have with those they trust. While we have ultimately been successful in filling PEG program slots, we go into year two with a much better sense of the local level supports that will be needed for outreach for full enrollment.

**Inclusion.** MA PEG, to date, has not met its target for the number of children with identified disabilities enrolled. While we will describe the many valid reasons for this at this particular point in the school year, this report will also highlight some concerns related to this target. Some see this target as a quota and, as such, an inappropriate method for program design. Others recognize the intent to ensure both inclusion and the availability of services that best support the individual needs of all children. Ultimately, EEC recognizes that the inclusion of children with disabilities is a high priority and is going to require additional infrastructure development at the local level to ensure that LEA and ELP partners identify the methods for inclusion that best meet the needs of children and families and build on partner strengths.

**Comprehensive Services.** Despite the fact that all PEG communities have looked to Head Start as the gold standard for defining and delivering comprehensive services, levels of implementation vary across PEG programs. The reasons for this variation are many and are generally a combination of determining the needs of children and families not previously in the system, the best methods to meet these needs and the most efficient ways in which to fund this service delivery. This will be an area that EEC will work with each local PEG community to resolve as the PEG program continues to evolve.

**Data Systems.** EEC is in the process of developing a new Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system that combines two antiquated methods of subsidized child care management into a new platform for overall system

integration. Due to unanticipated challenges in development of the CCFA, the planned integration of PEG data into the CCFA had been delayed. Meanwhile, state level child identifiers (SASIDs) have been assigned, as required, at the local LEA for all children in the PEG program. We have the capacity to use these numbers to link EEC data with the elementary and secondary education data system (Edwin), however, we have still to address the challenges of respecting student's privacy rights while establishing a system for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to report back to EEC data that will eventually be held on students' elementary school success.

**Conclusion:** As this report will represent in detail, the first year of PEG implementation in Massachusetts has been, on balance, a tremendous success. From the classroom to the board room, EEC has put key elements in place to support achievement of the PEG goals. The agency's commitment to bringing this opportunity to fruition is paramount and its expectations are high. We look forward to learning all that there is to learn - be it easy to hear or not - from the results of our longitudinal study and using these lessons to inform local design in the short term and state early childhood infrastructure in the long term.

Note: throughout this report, text in italics have been included as examples of the work being done at the local level. This text has been gathered through interviews of community partners explicitly for inclusion in this report.





**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: MA PR/Award #: S419B150023

**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.

Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) funding has allowed Massachusetts' Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to work with five communities, Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield, to build new partnerships and create new state prekindergarten openings in these communities. In Year I of this grant, as of December 1st, EEC increased the number of state supported openings for eligible children by 702. As communities have continued to enroll children after this number was calculated, and as Boston is serving more children than originally planned, we expect that this number will grow over the course of the year and will exceed the state's original plan to serve 755 children through high-quality preschool programs served by this grant. EEC's new enrollment target is 859 children in each year of the grant. As of this writing, MA PEG programs overall are over 95 percent enrolled toward this new goal.

In each PEG community, the school department (LEA) and community-based providers (ELPs) have engaged in planning activities from the time of the grant award until programs opened in the fall of 2015. Communities were required to identify and enroll "hard to reach" families, meaning that PEG enrolled children had a high likelihood that without this opportunity they would have entered kindergarten with little to no prior preschool experience. As there is no state-wide understanding of the characteristics of families who do not enroll their children in education programs prior to Kindergarten, local knowledge was essential in finding eligible families. With this target audience in mind, each community worked to develop a new, shared vision for public preschool.

In four of the five communities, (Boston being the exception), the new PEG-funded openings were slated solely for children who had never received any formal early education, including family childcare, prior to enrolling in the PEG-funded classrooms. This decision followed from an analyses that identified large numbers of underserved children entering Kindergarten in these communities.

While programs initially anticipated a flood of applicants and had designed strategies to prioritize enrollment to those with the most need, all were surprised to find that outreach efforts were going to be much more robust than originally planned. With the exception of Boston, that elected to serve children already enrolled (reasoning described below), and Lawrence, where a local wait list was tapped to quickly fill the program with eligible children, communities were shocked in September and October to find some of their new classrooms with empty seats. Programs quickly discovered that extensive outreach was going to be necessary to locate and bring in eligible children. Hard to reach meant just that. The time required to do such extensive enrollment led to an unanticipated delay in fully enrolling classrooms. EEC asked the programs to put a great deal of effort into their outreach and required them to continue this work right through January. Some of the efforts made were:

- The LEAs and ELPs collaborated in sending PEG staff to various community events to meet families face to face.

- Identification of local community organizations that were willing to collaborate in getting the message out to families.
- Surveying community leaders to develop a better understanding of where and how to locate particular groups of families that may have a history of disengagement from public education systems prior to Kindergarten, such as particular immigrant communities.
- EEC's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) staff and local grantees provided support to communities during the outreach process by consulting with the LEA and ELP leadership around outreach opportunities in the communities and using EEC activities, such as facilitated parent-child play groups, to get the word out to families about the program.
- In October 2015 EEC organized a grantee meeting that focused on a discussion of outreach strategies and included a panel of experts from programs working with incarcerated mothers and supporting immigrants in MA, as well as EEC's CFCE coordinator.

To illustrate the extensive outreach efforts undertaken to fully enroll PEG classrooms, the following is a list of sites that received enrollment outreach (submitted to EEC) by the PEG partners in Lowell. Despite these many efforts, Lowell has recently elected to provide limited transportation services to increase enrollment and, as a result, is just now near full enrollment.

- WIC (Women, including Pregnant Women, Infants, and Children) Program 45-47 Kirk Street, 1st
- (SuitAbility) Community Teamwork, SuitAbility Program Free interview/work clothing & work related support 155 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01852, 978-934-8898
- Lowell Adult Education 408 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01854. 978-937-8989. LPS just met with all the classes on December 21, 2015 at the Adult Education office and gave out flyers to each class and talk to parents individually
- Middlesex Community College (MCC), 33 Kearney Square, Lowell, MA 01852, 978-656-3208 OR 978-656-3200, X3207 [www.middlesex.mass.edu](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu)
- South Bay Early Intervention 148 Warren Street Lowell, MA 01852 978-452-1736 Intake Department: 1-800-244-4691
- Family Literacy Center Early Childhood and Adult Education Classes 43 Highland Street, Lowell, MA 01852 978-674-4330. LPS did a presentation to the parents at the center
- Lowell Transitional Living Center, Inc. Multi Service Men & Women's homeless shelter 205-209 Middlesex Street, Lowell, MA 01852 978-458-9888
- (IIS Program) Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers Helps immigrants link w/ job, housing & government services 11 Mill Street, Lowell, MA 01852 978-970-1250
- International Institute of Lowell 15-17 Warren St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lowell, MA (978) 459-9031
- Northeast Legal Aid 35 John Street Suite 302 Lowell, Massachusetts 01852
- United Teen Equality Center 35 Warren Street Lowell, MA 01852 (978) 441-9949
- UMASS Lowell
- MSPCC 126 Phoenix Ave 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Lowell, MA
- Lowell Community Health Center 161 Jackson St. Lowell, MA



- Salvation Army 150 Appleton St. Lowell, MA
- Department of Transitional Assistance 131 Davidson St. Lowell, MA
- African Assistance Center 9 Central St Suite 603
- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association 120 Cross St. Lowell, MA
- NFI Family Resource Center 27 Prescott St. Lowell, MA (revisiting)
- Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities 48 Lawrence St. Lowell, MA
- Children's Friend and Family Services 15 Union St. Lowell, MA
- LPS Family Resource Center, 151 Merrimack Street and this is where parents register and new flyers are posted
- Lowell SPED Parent Advisory 155 Merrimack St Lowell, MA.
- Wayside 73 E. Merrimack St. Lowell, MA
- Department of Children and Families 33 E Merrimack St. Lowell, MA (revisiting)
- Lowell Academy Hairstyling Institute 136 Central St. Lowell ,MA
- Anne Sullivan Center (Early Intervention) 126 Phoenix Ave Lowell, MA
- Family Connection of Greater Lowell (Pawtucket Congregational Church) 15 Mammoth Rd. Lowell, MA
- Grandparents as Parents 70 Lawrence St. Lowell, MA
- United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley
- District Court of Restraining Orders 41 Hurd St. Lowell, MA
- Food Stamp Program (SNAP) 131 Davidson St. Lowell, MA
- Health and Human Services 325 Chelmsford St. #6 Lowell, MA
- Mental Health Association of Lowell 99 Church St. Lowell, MA
- Lowell Housing Authority 21 Salem St. Lowell, MA

In late December, EEC allowed programs to fill remaining openings with children who had received some prior formal early education, although all were discouraged from accepting children currently enrolled in another program. We are pleased that as of the writing of this report, the grant-funded classrooms are largely fully enrolled, with a few at 95 plus percent enrollment. The efforts required to fully enroll these programs resulted in the building of new relationships across the communities, often with faith-based organizations and other groups that might not have initially been involved in the PEG funded programs, but will provide important supports for future outreach efforts as well as community-wide integration of the grant funded programs into the fabric of these communities.

In Boston, an awareness of the extensive availability of early education programs for four year-olds led to the decision to integrate the grant funding with other funding sources, in an effort to expand the quality over the quantity of publicly funded openings available to children in the current programs. This decision allowed programs in Boston more flexibility to braid funding sources and, in some programs, serve children in mixed-income and mixed-age classrooms. As many of the children served by the grant-funded programs in Boston were already receiving EEC subsidies or were attending Head Start programs, the cost per PEG child was ultimately lower in Boston and they therefore had the ability to serve more children. This opportunity allowed Boston Public Schools to identify additional community-based partners to provide PEG-funded programming. In

August, Boston Public Schools put out a request for responses to identify additional community-based programs interested in participating in the grant funded programming. On November 5, additional grantees were brought on board. Although Boston planned to enroll 198 children via three ELPs, the Boston programs were serving 263 children via eight ELPs as of December 1, 2015.

This focus on reaching the hard to reach and enrolling PEG classrooms principally with "new" children has challenged local teams to identify methods to build on their strengths, share best practices and support improvements across programs. As a result, innovative planning processes and program designs have emerged. For example:

- All LEA and ELP partners met weekly from January through June of 2015 to design their approach to meeting PEG goals. Ultimately **each community chose to provide in-kind this first six months of planning time.** Rather than charge this time to the grant, communities chose to focus all PEG funds on program implementation for a full year of services to children starting in September 2015 and running through August 2016.
- In Springfield and Lowell, the local team identified a shared space that would be newly licensed as a PEG preschool program and, although each provider continues to be licensed independently by EEC, no distinctions between service providers are made at the site.
- In Springfield, Lowell and Lawrence the collaborations have developed their own name and logo; the Springfield Cooperative Preschool (SCOOP), the Lawrence Early Achievement Partnership (LEAP) and the Lowell Collaborative Preschool Academy (LCPA). This branding further reduces public awareness of the different service providers and identifies the PEG-funded program as unique.
- In Holyoke the public schools offered ELPs space in their elementary schools so that all PEG services could be housed in the sites where children would continue on into kindergarten.
- Boston is the only community serving subsidized children in previously existing classrooms, therefore Boston has had to manage issues of morale between teachers in the same building that receive different levels of pay based on PEG participation. This also requires that participating Head Start classrooms have become full-day and full-year programs via PEG.
- In Lowell and Lawrence some limited transportation has been added, as a part of their comprehensive service model, to support full enrollment and access for families that otherwise would not be able to attend.
- In Boston, the nationally recognized Boston K1DS model has been expanded and enriched through PEG-funding to include family engagement, comprehensive services and full-day and full-year services across all partners.

Despite the benefits of joint planning across LEA and ELPs, challenges were encountered as partners worked to develop a common vision. These included:

Questions have been raised about the extent to which the LEA should serve as the grant administrator and monitor, or as an equal partner in the delivery of direct services through the grant. In several communities, the budget negotiation and discussion about the role of public schools in program delivery rekindled long-standing fears of an early education system run by the public schools on one side, and opened some old wounds on the other, where public schools felt unfairly mistrusted and undervalued in terms of the services they could contribute. Ultimately, these discussions and negotiations have been successful in healing some old wounds and creating partnerships anew. This success can be seen the local budgets that reflect true partnership between LEAs and ELPs; both providing direct services. For example, in Boston, Lowell, Springfield and Holyoke coaching staff are funded through the LEA. In Springfield, comprehensive service staff that serve all three ELPS are funded via the LEA. Across all grantees, professional development costs are being shared. All partners are currently working together to determine even more efficient methods of collaboration in year two. One area to watch will be the extent to which LEAs can continue to provide the current level of in-kind supports to the management of the grant. Each LEA has taken no more than a 5 percent rate of funding for grant administration

and have ultimately invested far more time than reimbursed.

A challenge encountered with the LEA to ELP funding model has been the complexity of working with municipalities. Each LEA has to manage multiple levels of oversight, be it the public school district itself, the city government, or even school committees. This has created some delays, particularly in the LEA's ability to develop contracts with and move funds to ELPs, but all have come along. Springfield even provided funds up front and did all the ordering via its contracted vendors to get the classrooms outfitted with materials and supplies so that the program could open in time.

Key to the success of these local negotiations is the fact that EEC's PEG staff have been in regular attendance at meetings in the communities, supported the planning process, provided prompt clarification around policy questions that have arisen, and mediated the inevitable conflicts that have arisen as programs began a fairly complicated collaboration process.

In communities where prior collaborations had resulted in Birth - Grade 3 vision statements, EEC consistently reminded partners to return, as a guide, to the work that had already been done to build that vision for early childhood services and encourage PEG programming to reflect this vision in the field. For example, the Lowell Legacy is a cross-sector group that had previously developed a vision for early childhood services in Lowell. This vision was a source of support for PEG design. Similarly, in Boston a high-level partnership with the City had long planned for universal preschool in Boston. When negotiations became challenging at times, this group was a resource for helping PEG partners to keep to the larger vision and not allow differences to derail this important process. EEC itself has utilized a Birth to Grade Three workgroup in an advisory role. EEC will continue to encourage all PEG partners to return to big picture birth to grade three visions and collaborations to guide this work and partnerships at the local level.

As stated above, full enrollment was not attained immediately. As of this writing, programs have finally attained 95-100 percent enrollment state-wide. Efforts to ensure full enrollment at the beginning of year two are now underway in each PEG community.

The decision whether or not to offer transportation was challenging at times. In Boston, transportation is supported only for those for whom it is part of their state subsidy. Lowell added transportation on late in the start-up process out of need to fill slots. Lawrence provides only a small shuttle service from one school to one PEG site. Otherwise, communities have been very hesitant to include transportation services as part of the PEG model. Reasons include the high cost and management demands that would detract from the ability to provide other services, and a sense of fairness; once transportation is offered to one family, programs report, it becomes hard to deny the service to another.

Also due to the late arrival of full enrollment and the related challenge of not knowing precisely who the children and families would be, what their unique needs would be, and how programs could best meet them, some of the comprehensive service components of PEG programming have been uneven in the pace at which they have been able to start as well as in the programs ability to get them going.

Interestingly, PEG has offered programs that have traditionally worked within the subsidized system of care with opportunities to experiment with an education-focused funding stream not directly tied to the state subsidy requirements. For example, rather than lose access to care due to absence as might occur in a subsidized slot, programs are charged with working with families to maximize attendance, understand reasons for absence and provide support where needed. This shift in mindset has been harder for some programs to adapt to but once embraced, fully incorporated into program design. As a direct example of this shift, the following letter was received from a PEG program director after learning that, rather than terminating the slot of a child that would be absent for a month in order to visit family in Africa, she was charged with incorporating the child's trip into an educational opportunity for the child, family, teacher and classroom as a whole. The results were astounding:

*EEC and PEG Grant Administration,*

*We would like to share some great things that are happening within our classroom community with*

you. Our Theme this month is "Awesome Animals". This Theme could not come at a better time; we have a student who will be leaving for Africa this weekend for a month. In saying that, we have incorporated the Continent of Africa, its habitat, animals we may encounter there; that are not seen here, as well as their traditions and forms of transportation. The children have been taught the difference between North America and South America, Africa etc. and that we call them continents; as well as why they are considered continents. The children have written her personal letters expressing how they will miss her. We have laminated all of them and made her a book; with pictures of her class to bring with her. There will also be a duplicate copy of it placed in our library.

The child's mother has shared with us the name of the city and village they will be traveling to, once they arrive in Africa. The language they will have to speak in order to communicate with her family there; we have been able to hear it spoken. The child has shared with us family photos of her family in Africa she will be visiting.

To ensure that the child stays up to date with the curriculum we will be sending with her the vocabulary words, a "what is it" bag (both the Big Day curriculum and AmeriCorps visual teaching tools). The child herself has asked that she bring these items. We will include directions on how to use these learning tools for mom. We will also be using email and Skype as forms of ongoing "home school" communication with her and her family.

The family has promised to bring us back interesting facts, pictures and tokens from Africa.

- Lead Teacher/Supervisor PEG Classroom

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

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

As described above, EEC has prioritized the enrollment of children with little to no prior preschool experience in its PEG programs. Most children are entering with no prior exposure to any educational system. As a result, programs are taking the time necessary to get to know the children, perform screening, identify their needs, and establish relationships with families. Programs are only now fully enrolled - new children have been entering the program almost daily. Not surprising, therefore, is the fact that Massachusetts has not yet met the PEG-required target of 6.9 percent children with identified disabilities (defined as a child with an Individual Education Plan or IEP with the local public school.) Because 6.9 percent of children in Massachusetts have identified disabilities, this target is slightly higher than the national percentage.

Specific efforts to support full inclusion of Eligible Children with Disabilities in the High-Quality Preschool Program (HQPP) are underway, however, and include the following elements:

- ***cost sharing, minimizing of administrative support, and other cost optimization measures and methods;***

The communities of Springfield and Holyoke have designed their PEG sites to be co-located with public school programs. In Springfield, many PEG classrooms are located in a public school-owned building alongside public school preschool classrooms; in Holyoke, the ELP classrooms are co-located in elementary school buildings that also house public school preschool classrooms as well as K-8 classrooms. Given that the public school special education staff work with the public preschool classrooms, this model of co-locating classroom has provided an opportunity to optimize expenses

related to serving children with disabilities as the staff can work together across public and community-based programs to directly deliver early childhood special education services, provide consultation services with ELP staff and/or to work together to proactively address the healthy growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

· *opportunities for early educators to participate in professional development;*

LEA sub-grantees along with their ELP partners were expected to address joint professional development as part of their application and budgeting process for Year 1. While many communities have implemented or have plans to implement joint professional development, the topics identified early in the planning process have generally focused on learning environments, curriculum, instruction and assessment practices more generally. As the year progresses, challenges related to the inclusion of eligible children with disabilities have highlighted the need for joint professional development in the area of inclusion. This need for joint professional development is being addressed at both the local and state level (see response later in this section for more information).

· *engagement and support for families of Eligible Children with Disabilities;*

As outreach and enrollment efforts continue, LEAs and ELPs are expected to work with IEP teams, including families, to talk about the benefits of enrolling in PEG classrooms. Conversations continue about how to serve children receiving IEP services in PEG classrooms at the ELP sites; however, in many cases, LEAs and ELPs are working together to identify children on IEPs who receive their services at a public school setting but may need extended hours and days of services beyond the public school calendar and who can be served in PEG classrooms. Talking with families about the benefits of the PEG classrooms has been a critical component of the outreach conducted by all five communities.

In Lowell and Lawrence, a considerable amount of time has been spent conducting home visits for families enrolled in the PEG classrooms. These site visits not only assisted with the transition into the start of the preschool year but have also provided a critical opportunity for ELP staff to build relationships with families; relationships that will very likely have a positive impact on the child's development and learning and the teachers' ability to meet each child's needs.

· *offering comprehensive services or other child health services within the High Quality Preschool Program (HQPP);*

One of the many benefits of having eligible children with disabilities enrolled in the PEG classrooms is the provision of comprehensive services. Many communities have planned to use Head Start as a model for comprehensive services as it is a strong one for ensuring that children and families, including children with disabilities, have access to the many and important supports that can strengthen a child's development and learning, including health, mental health, speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc. These services are increasingly being offered as full enrollment is attained and the needs of children are being identified.

One concern that has arisen from PEG programs is that the PEG program sets a "quota" for the number of children with disabilities. Since the eligibility for PEG classrooms is that the child has not had any type of formal early childhood experience, the majority of children served have never been referred for an evaluation through special education or have been determined eligible for special education services. **Comprehensive services such as OT, PT and speech have the potential to proactively respond to children who may be behind developmentally and may serve to avoid referral to special education.** In this case, it could be seen as a positive outcome if the target is not met. Whether a child currently has an IEP, has been referred to special education for an evaluation, or is being observed to determine whether a referral is necessary, these comprehensive services are critical to better understand where a child is in his/her development and to ensure that time to support development and learning is not lost during the referral and eligibility determination processes. Communities like Springfield and Lawrence have been focused on ensuring that all children have access to services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy. Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of these comprehensive services will support the children to make process and ultimately, result in fewer referrals to special education. For example, at a recent PEG meeting with special education staff at the



Lawrence Public Schools it was noted that 99 percent of children referred to special education from the local early intervention program receive and IEP. Many at the meeting were left wondering if a year in a high quality PEG program might reduce the rate at which children transitioning from early intervention to public school would require an IEP.

In addition, mental health services and services that support a child's social and emotional well-being are a high priority for the PEG classrooms. The communities' extensive outreach to hard-to-reach families has been successful in identifying children who are in need of supports, including children who are experiencing homelessness, trauma and other toxic stressors. PEG communities have been diligent in their efforts to respond to these much needed mental health supports. For example, Springfield recently hired a behavior health specialist in order to be able to provide mental health services at the PEG site; other communities are planning and/or referring children and families to community-based organizations to meet their needs. Responding to children's social and emotional needs is also a critical component of the learning environment, curriculum and instruction. These topics are addressed through joint planning for professional development as well.

· ***age-appropriate facilities that are designed to also meet the needs of eligible children with disabilities;***

Since 26 of the total 46 PEG classrooms in MA are newly licensed and outfitted specifically for the PEG program, they have been designed by local partners to meet the needs of children in their communities. As experts in the early education of local high needs, the LEAs and ELPs have created bright, well-equipped locations where all children can thrive. In existing classrooms, equipment and supplies have been added to ensure enriched experiences.

· ***any other elements of your plan pertaining to access and inclusion of eligible children with disabilities in High Quality Preschool Programs;***

At the state level, we recently began work with our state 619 coordinator, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Administration for Children and Families staff, PEG staff and staff from EEC's Professional Development unit to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan with PEG communities (including ELPs, Head Start Disability Coordinators and Public School Early Childhood Special Education staff) came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed in communities. This joint professional development will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the work of the early childhood field to successfully include children with disabilities in all settings, including community-based programs. Our first meeting with communities is scheduled for April 29, 2016.

As we move closer to year two, PDG communities have been encouraged to ensure that PDG classrooms are included in the options of least restrictive settings for children with IEPs as placement for next year's IEP services are determined. In addition, to ensure that PDG educators have the appropriate training and supports to serve children with disabilities, the Department of Early Education and Care, in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Administration for Children and Families, is developing a professional development series on inclusion using the Preschool Inclusion Tool Kit as well as feedback from the five communities on challenges related to inclusion to guide the topics of the series.



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 most influential factors that have contributed to EEC's success in creating new preschool slots funded by this grant include the following;

- The grant funding was distributed to collaborations rather than individual providers, allowing each community to create a new system that built on the strengths of existing programs. Head Start grantees are represented in each community and bring their experience providing high quality services to family and children. In many communities, these programs have taken the lead in advising the group on the best ways to engage with families and provide comprehensive services. Programs licensed by EEC and who have a long history of serving children receiving EEC subsidies have also played a central role. These programs are familiar with EEC requirements, have experience meeting the needs of low income families and providing early education services in each of these communities. Finally, the public school district serves as the LEA in each community and brings an understanding of the elementary and secondary educational system that children receiving PEG-funded programming will enter. The public schools are well situated to support community-wide alignment and alignment between the PEG model and public school programs.
- As the PEG-funded programs have been developed, EEC has relied on existing policies, while prioritizing a family-friendly approach that focuses on ensuring children's needs are met. At the foundation of the PEG model are the licensed programs providing services. EEC licensing regulations are some of the most stringent in the nation and ensure that children are in safe and developmentally appropriate environments. PEG programs are all required to participate in the Commonwealth's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), to ensure continuing quality improvement. Attendance is also being tracked, as it is in the subsidy system. However, in PEG programs the expectation is that programs will work with the families in ways that support positive child and family outcomes. For example, if children demonstrate chronic absenteeism, the program is expected to identify the barriers for families and support change, rather than expel families for poor attendance, as required by the subsidy system. The availability of comprehensive services can play an important role in changing key dynamics, as in the case of a family in Springfield where a mother's post-partum depression and the abandonment of the family by the newborn's father resulted in a child missing 40 days of school in the first three months. The program was able to obtain mental health services for the mother and schedule regular check-ins to monitor her progress and attend to any other issues that may come up for the family. The child now attends regularly.
- Efforts have been made to consider the alignment of EEC policies through the implementation process, both by ensuring that PEG-requirements were aligned with current policies and identifying challenges at the program level in implementing policies. For example, PEG requirements are well aligned with the Commonwealth's licensing requirements; class size and child-teacher ratio requirements are already required by licensing for example. EEC staff are also working closely with PEG programs to integrate the various requirements these programs face. EEC's Senior Professional Development Specialist is working with programs to identify the professional development requirements of the QRIS system, discuss each communities' vision for professional development and determine a coherent plan to meet all these needs with the time available.
- EEC PEG-funded staff regularly attend local planning and implementation committee meetings. Through such frequent attendance, EEC staff have built a deep understanding of each community, while being available to respond quickly to questions about the design of the program as they have arisen. In some cases, issues can be quickly addressed as they arise at the meetings, while others require EEC staff to bring questions back for consideration. In these instances, due to the placement of the PEG Director as a direct report to the Commissioner, EEC is able to provide a quick responses to questions as they arise, ensuring that communities' planning and implementation are not impeded.
- Throughout the planning and implementation of PEG programs, EEC staff has ensured that EEC and Executive Office of Education leadership is aware of program successes and challenges as they arise. The

PEG Director meets weekly with EEC's Commissioner to update him on issues and questions that have arisen. The Commissioner updates the EEC Board, which includes the Secretary of Education, at monthly meetings. Additionally, PEG staff is now preparing our third full presentation on PEG implementation for the Board since January of 2015. All involved are very interested in learning from PEG and using lessons learned to inform future policy.

The monitoring process developed for PEG programs is also expected to serve as a key factor in our success and, again, builds and improves on existing infrastructure. EEC has begun the process of monitoring LEAs and expects LEAs to monitor ELPs with similar procedures. EEC has performed one round of technical assistance auditing of each PEG community and will conduct both formal fiscal and programmatic monitoring in the Spring/Summer of 2016. These technical assistance audits with each LEA to provide them guidance in these processes, which they are now expected to use with grantees. The fiscal monitoring process uses procedures already in place to monitor subsidy use. The programmatic monitoring happens simultaneously to ensure, not only is money being managed responsibly and spent as planned, but is aligned with programmatic requirements.

Regional monitoring teams of all EEC staff with contacts with these communities or programs will meet twice a year, starting in year two to discuss the PEG programs. Issues will be shared with the PEG director as they arise. This group includes EEC staff at the local level including licensors, QRIS quality specialists, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Specialists, Educator Providers Support Specialists and the Regional Directors. Again, this model builds upon the knowledge of EEC's infrastructure while focusing it in new way.

**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.

A full 100 percent of PEG funding at the Department of Early Education and Care is dedicated to increasing the quantity of state-funded preschool due to the fact that there is currently no state-funded prekindergarten in EEC's budget. Funds for public preschool administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are described below. All state funds disbursed by EEC are focused on improving the quality of the licensed programs already in the system, i.e. Universal PreKindergarten and 391 grants, Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) supports, Educator Provider Supports grants, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grants, Head Start Supplemental and Early Childhood Mental Health grants all increase the availability of resources to support quality in EEC licensed programs. The only public funding that is targeted at financing the full costs of providing early education services in Massachusetts comes from federal funds through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides Chapter 70 funding to ensure parity in education spending across districts. The numbers of four year olds served in public school prekindergarten programming is accounted for in the formula that allocates funding across districts, primarily directed at services to children with identified special needs in inclusive classrooms. As a result of PEG design that includes public school districts as key players in local design, there is a great deal of interest in learning from the implementation of the PEG model about how best to develop a more integrated and more robustly funded system through the combination of local, state and federally funded resources.

Because of the expectation that PEG communities will integrate systems and programs across public schools and community-based providers, many important questions have been raised about how resources and funding streams could be best knit together into a coherent and effective system for providing free public prekindergarten to all eligible children in PEG communities. Some of these questions include:

- What is the relationship between Chapter 70 and PEG-funded children? Should these children be counted as part of the calculation of the PEG school district's Chapter 70 funding, even though the school district

is not directly providing early education services to these children?

- How might Head Start funding be used to provide Head Start's comprehensive services to all PEG children who would be eligible but are not being served in a Head Start program?
- How can communities develop a more centralized or collaborative system for supporting eligible families in identifying the best program for their family and child from the full set of possibilities available in the community? PEG collaborations provide an important opportunity to identify the best way to integrate these systems. Debates are occurring in PEG communities about what the best point of entry should be for families (multiple entry points through individual programs or centralized utilizing the public school kindergarten enrollment infrastructure) and whether a centralized database is necessary or if information sharing about the local options is enough. Additionally, the families that are the hardest to reach are also the families who are least likely to follow through with a complex process. Providing families with phone numbers to call, requesting they return with documentation or asking families to visit a different site are all common activities, but all run the risk of losing a family through lack of follow up. Reducing the number of points of contact, providing support in completing forms and scheduling home visits for follow up information are approaches used by individual providers that are being discussed as to whether they should be integrated into community-wide enrollment practices.
- A subtext throughout all these discussions is a question of who "owns" the responsibility for children served through a collaboration like PEG. The programs directly serving the children are licensed by EEC. Ultimately, each program is therefore legally responsible for the services they provide and EEC is the authority deeming them competent to provide such services. Yet, there are many opportunities for the collaborative provision of services which raise questions about how responsibility is delegated when multiple organizations are together serving one child. For example, in the PEG program in Springfield, a public school nurse is available to work with PEG children, yet each EEC-licensed program has no responsibility for her, not having hired, nor supervising her. Is it acceptable for them to put their children in her care? Who is responsible if something happens to a child in her care? What other implications might exist for the safety of the children if a teacher leaves the classroom to take a child to the nurse? Similarly, if a sibling of a PEG child is taking a public school bus to the same school building as the PEG child, could this sibling ride the bus too? If so, who is responsible for the welfare of this child? Additionally, organizations do not typically feel responsibility for children until they are enrolled. What would it take to develop a sense of collective responsibility across all organizations for all the children in the community? How might a shared enrollment process build such a shared sense of responsibility?
- What will happen to any budding collaboration each time there is a shift in the system that refocuses attention on potential competition? What happens if the public schools decide to allocate more of their Chapter 70 funding to public prekindergarten classrooms and draw children away from the PEG-funded programs? What happens if the full-day programming of PEG draws children away from the part-day programming provided by the public schools? How do Head Start programs respond when children decide to enroll in PEG rather than Head Start for similar reasons?

PEG has provided EEC an opportunity to take a step towards answering these questions. Each community has the opportunity to build models and share lessons learned to shape how Massachusetts moves toward the integration of early childhood systems to provide universal access to eligible children.

The level of commitment in Massachusetts to moving forward in this process is reflected in the money budgeted by the Legislature for planning grants that have recently been awarded to 13 communities across Massachusetts. Using the PEG as a model, each community has been tasked with developing a plan on how they would either expand or build a more integrated system of early education for eligible four year olds in their communities.

**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.

MA Curriculum Frameworks provide our state's standards that guide not only the curriculum and instruction provided for children at any grade, but also provide a framework, from preschool through grade 12, of the skills and competencies that will support their ability to be successful in school. These standards also provide our state with a guide for screening and assessment practices.

Prior to receiving the Preschool Expansion Grant funds, Massachusetts was the fortunate recipient of the federally-funded Race-to-the-Top/Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT). The RTT grant offered Massachusetts the opportunity to build a kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) system. The Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) initiative is in its fourth year and though challenging, the Preschool Expansion Grant, provided our state with an opportunity to further build its comprehensive assessment system to include preschool.

Our state's KEA utilizes the GOLD tool, published by Teaching Strategies (TS Gold). With the exception of a few districts that use Work Sampling System, the Gold tool is used in kindergarten in districts that receive the state's Quality Full-Day Kindergarten grant. With the exception of Boston, districts in the PEG communities implement the GOLD tool in kindergarten, which provides the communities with an important opportunity to



share formative assessment data on children utilizing the same tool for consecutive years.

Over the last four years, there have been a number of lessons learned through the implementation of the MKEA that the state has taken into consideration as it rolls out its PEG plan. First, the acronym MKEA became synonymous with the tool published by Teaching Strategies, GOLD, and not with formative assessment and the practice of observation to inform instruction. Additional professional development for educators and administrators is needed in this area.

In addition, the acronym erroneously implied that the initiative was focused on a student's competencies at entry to kindergarten only, instead of reflecting a formative assessment framework that was designed to measure a child's progress and inform instruction over time. The provision of professional development on formative assessment as well as reframing and evolving the initiative in this space (e.g., *Formative Assessment of Young Children: Improving Teaching and Learning in the Early Grades through Observation*) to more accurately reflect the goals that we are proposing through our state's joint position statement on assessment in the early grades (in progress) would help to strengthen assessment practices.

This reframing should not only inform assessment practices in the kindergarten space but also preschool, including recipients of the Preschool Expansion Grant. While the post-RTT sustainability plans for the MKEA are still under consideration, it's not likely that use of the GOLD tool will be required in kindergarten in the next school year. However, the state has an opportunity to strengthen formative assessment practices in the preschool and kindergarten space and, through PEG, to consider how to support school districts in continuing use of the tool so as to create better alignment in assessment practices and the transition of data between preschool and kindergarten. This focus on formative assessment practices in preschool and kindergarten is necessary to enhance early learning opportunities as outlined in our state's *Building the Foundation of Future Success for Children from Birth through Grade 3, for all children, including children enrolled in the PEG program*.

#### Assessments and Instruments

· ***list the assessment tool(s) you are using and indicate when the test is given;***

The GOLD tool will be used as a pre- and post-assessment administered by the ELPs. Minimally, the data will be reported using Teaching Strategies online platform in the fall and in the summer. ELPs also have the opportunity to utilize the tool mid-way through the year in order to measure progress and determine strategies for differentiation and individualization moving forward.

Additionally, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has recently contracted with Abt Associates to design and conduct the evaluation of the Preschool Expansion Grant. In the second year of the evaluation, the researchers will be conducting both pre- and post-assessments on enrolled children. The final list of assessments is still being determined but will include instruments to measure children's social-emotional development, language and literacy skills, basic math understandings, and health.

· ***include the description of coverage of the five essential domains of SR;***

The GOLD tool includes coverage of the five essential domains; in this particular tool, the indicators of development and learning are grouped into 6 categories and include: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy and mathematics. The information about children's development reported in bi-annual "checkpoints" is organized by the tool into "bands" that identify the typical ages at which particular skills and abilities emerge. These "bands" make it easy for programs to identify at a glance which children are in normative ranges and for whom and for what domains additional support may be required. Information can also be aggregated to the classroom or program level to identify the rates at which children are within normative ranges in the domains assessed.

· ***note whether the tool is used throughout the high needs communities or has been adopted for use statewide;***

For the purposes of the Preschool Expansion Grant, the GOLD tool is used in all PEG classrooms as children enter and exit their 4-year-old preschool year. The tool has not been adopted for use statewide though it is well aligned with other initiatives administered by the Department of Early Education and Care, including Universal Preschool funding and the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

### Training and Test Quality

EEC has a contract with the Collaborative Educational Services to provide training in both formative assessment and the implementation of TS Gold. Most programs were already familiar with using the tool through their participation in EEC's UPK grant. As a result, the need for training was not extensive and many programs handled this internally.

TS Gold has done extensive work on the validity and reliability of this assessment when used by teachers who have passed their reliability training. To date, EEC has not required this training of teachers, as we wanted to give programs new to the tool time to become familiar with it. However, we are discussing the advantages of such a requirement in future years. Programs submit "checkpoint" summary data on all their children twice a year and EEC has access to this data as well as the documentation that supports the scores. Therefore, EEC has the capacity to do spot checks on the quality of documentation to ensure that teachers are not simply entering scores but basing scores on extensive and appropriate observations. Additionally, EEC can review the scores and look for suspicious patterns of results. Due to the fact that PEG-funded children have been enrolled for six months or less, EEC does not have data yet to utilize via the TS Gold checkpoint process.

### Plans for Year Two Reporting

- In year two, we will be able to use the final checkpoint (submitted in the summer) of the children currently in PEG to provide information about the school readiness of these children. We are currently reviewing our definition of school readiness and considering whether the normative "bands" of development in the domains aligned with the essential domains of school readiness will give us the information that we need. If we take this approach, we can report the number of children considered ready for kindergarten in each domain due to falling in a normative band of development for their age.
- As we have direct access to the TS Gold data at the child level through TS Gold's data system, we have the ability to provide data by community, as well as by the basic demographic categories required in federal reporting.
- We can also link this information with the data we are collecting from PEG communities about the various categories of children who may need additional support, as required in this APR.
- Also to be determined is the capacity to align TS Gold data with unique student identifiers (SASIDs) assigned to each child by the local public schools.



**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.**

Not Applicable

## 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 recent article in *The Boston Globe* focused on the demand for teachers in early childhood programs across Massachusetts made hopeful reference to the PEG program - it tells the story of a teacher in a PEG classroom that was inspired to come back to teaching preschoolers at a PEG-funded site after having left the field for higher wages. Massachusetts' PEG program provides a ray of hope; a model that acknowledges this need, is having some early success, and has the potential to serve as a model in other areas of system development. The PEG model is being looked to for answers to inform many areas of development of the larger system of early education and care. In many ways, the first year of this federally-funded program has become a high profile testing ground for how early education could be - when ambitiously designed, carefully supported, more fully funded and collaboratively implemented at the local, state and federal levels. Not only will PEG serve as an opportunity to learn what elements of its design are most effective, EEC will be wise to learn the impacts that this concentration of resources has on the field over all. Are low levels of enrollment in Head Start in Springfield, for example, due to the creation of PEG classrooms? What impact will occur in programs that lost a degreed teacher who left for a higher salary in a PEG program? Will the concentration of low income four year-old children in PEG classrooms detract from programs that otherwise mix ages and income levels?

Additional examples of areas where the PEG model is informing the development of infrastructure necessary to sustain quality over time and across the larger system of early education state-wide are outlined below.

#### Structures for Collaboration and Coordination:

*“PEG is an opportunity to bring the best of the public and private worlds together.” --- Boston PEG Director*

The PEG design of coordination of funding and oversight includes an emphasis on direct service and concentration of efforts on the teaching staff, children and families served. It also requires that all funding and program design decisions must be made collaboratively by the local LEA and ELP partners. While 95 percent of the grant funds implementation via grants to LEAs who then sub-grant to ELPs, each LEA may retain only a base amount of 5 percent for grant administration. The use of all other funds are required to be agreed to at the community level to support direct services such as classroom environments, coaching, comprehensive services and family engagement.

EEC itself has limited its portion of the PEG to 5 percent as well. These funds cover the salaries and benefits of 3 full time staff. EEC hired the individuals charged with implementation of the PEG program carefully:

- Anita Moeller serves as the Director of the MA PEG program. She has nearly 30 years experience in early education. She spent 15 years as the founding executive director of the Acre Family Child Care System and as served the Commonwealth since 2001 in several roles including Head Start State Collaboration Director, EEC Regional Director, and EEC Director of Interagency Partnerships.

Anita holds a Masters in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

- Jocelyn Bowne is the Senior Research Specialist for the PEG program. Jocelyn came to EEC from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child. Not only does she hold a EdD from Harvard's Graduate School of Education with a focus on early childhood research but she has prior personal experience as a preschool teacher in New York City.
- Sarah Volkenant is the Senior Professional Development Specialist for the PEG program. Sarah has worked directly with preschool teachers as a coach, has directly supervised coaches and has managed a coaching program in Arizona that was closely tied with supporting programs' advancement through their QRIS. Sarah holds a Masters degree in Educational Psychology. She also has experience as a preschool teacher.

An Interagency Service Agreement with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education allows for up to 10 hours per week of the time of their Early Childhood State Lead, Donna Traynham; Donna not only brings years of experience and tremendous expertise in early education policy - her close partnership in the PEG program exemplifies the collaboration expected at all levels of program implementation.

EEC uses the balance of PEG dollars to support the longitudinal study, joint efforts for professional development, and is planning the development of information technology infrastructure that will not only support PEG but will enhance the system overall.

### Professional Development

While coaching was not a required element of PEG programming, coaching models are emerging from PEG grantees that will inform future PD efforts. All but one has implemented coaching in some form and that community has plans to incorporate coaching into year 2 programming. EEC's PD Specialist is working across the system that includes local efforts plus EEC-funded supports to determine how the system can maximize the supports currently available, while ensuring that teachers can benefit from coaching, and duplication of efforts doesn't limit effective practice.

### Inclusion

As described earlier in this report, EEC is looking to PEG for innovative new collaborations between LEA and ELP partners that better meet the needs of child with disabilities and their families. Whether this results in fewer transitions for children, new ways of funding services collaboratively, joint professional development for teachers, interventions that ultimately reduce the need for referrals to special education or some combination of these, EEC looks forward to innovations to follow.

### Tracking of data

In year one the process for assigning SASIDs has been developed, EEC has developed methods for gathering data from each grantee and TSG data is being entered on each child. As the program develops, EEC will work to tie elements such as these into developing systems such as the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system and the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) database.

### Grant Monitoring

The process for monitoring via a simultaneous fiscal and program approach, the use of Regional Monitoring Teams, and the monitoring of ELPS by LEAs are all new methods of monitoring for EEC and each is expected to generate lessons learned that will inform future process. Lessons learned from the longitudinal study will also be fed back to PEG programs to inform future development.

### Research

With the longitudinal study component of PEG, EEC will not only be able to garner tremendous lessons from the PEG experience but also determine other sources of research resources to support EECs work more broadly. For example, in year one EEC was able to connect to the Research Division at DESE - a team that has contributed considerable support to the PEG study design and the selection of the contractor that will do the work. EEC has also been in contact the Regional Education Lab in order to identify future joint efforts that could support not

only PEG but EEC more broadly.

### Roll-out of New Standards

While EEC has strong licensing requirements and has had Early Childhood Program Standards since 2003, new standards have been developed including; WIDA's Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELD), Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Approaches to Play and Learning (APL). PEG will work with EEC and DESE staff to ensure training available to PEG staff and provide feedback related to the outcomes.

### Alignment of EEC-funded supports

The PEG program challenges state and local partners to examine methods by which existing grant funds can be aligned to support quality programming at the local level. For example, PEG programs are regularly making use of the EEC funded supports of QRIS specialists, CFCE grantees, Early Childhood Mental Health grantees and Educator Provider Supports grantees. As PEG staff work closely with local grantees EEC is able to gain new insight into the challenges and possibilities that occur when programs with common goals align.

### Funding

Simultaneous to PEG roll out is the state's development of plans for the implementation of newly reauthorized Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding. Lessons learned from PEG implementation will be available to inform EEC's design. For example, PEG's focus on hard to reach families, with limited transportation, no parent fees, streamlined eligibility determination, high expectations of quality, higher teacher qualifications and pay, combined with the results of the longitudinal evaluation provides EEC with unique insight into what these elements yield in terms of impacts on children, families, programs and the field as a whole.

With its eyes on the PEG program, the MA legislature included \$500K in EEC's budget this year for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership program. This funding is for the development of local strategic plans, based on the PEG model, for increased high quality preschool programming in high-need communities. The results will inform the ability of the 13 communities selected for the grant to serve 3-5 year-olds. Of these grantees, four are current PEG grantees who now have the opportunity to examine their ability to expand PEG-like preschool services to children starting at age 3.

## **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.

The Preschool Expansion Grant has provided the Commonwealth with the opportunity to continue to advance high quality preschool programs for children, aligned with federal High-Quality Preschool Program (HQPP) standards, by building on our strong foundation of licensing regulations, expanding provider enrollment and upward movement in the MA QRIS, with continued supports for workforce development. Ten of the twelve structural elements of a HQPP as defined in the federal application package are included across the MA quality standards. The two standards on which progress needed to be made to meet the structural elements of HQPP for the Preschool Expansion Grant were the requirement for a Bachelor degree educator in each classroom and salary comparability with similar LEA positions. MA is in compliance with these two remaining standards for programs funded through this grant.

Five high-need communities in Massachusetts -- Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield -- are being funded to implement full-day, full-year preschool for four-year-olds through public-private partnerships between the local public school district as the lead education agency (LEA) and two or three local licensed early learning providers (ELPs). The LEAs have been granted the funds and are subcontracting with the ELPs for the direct services they provide to eligible children and families in the community. While the ELPs provide direct services to the four-year-old children, the LEAs have worked with the ELPs to create and sustain implementation plans that include all structural elements that are included in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. Vignettes that provide anecdotal information from the PEG grantees throughout the state are italicized throughout this narrative to provide real-life examples of how the components of the Preschool Expansion Grant have positively impacted the children and families of the Commonwealth.

*“The Preschool Expansion Grant programs really are working. Even coming into it, you don't know what to expect and you're not sure you're going to reach the families you hope to reach, but we have. And we've made such an impact. We're really looking forward to the second year when we're all seasoned. This year has been so successful already.” - Springfield Site Director*

#### Description of Progress and Accomplishments: Structural Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) requires that all PEG-funded LEA and ELP partners in each community complete a Direct Service Summary (DSS) to outline an implementation plan for High-Quality Preschool Programs for eligible children. All quality criteria are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services that will support four year-old children in developing critical development and learning competencies needed for successful learning. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation. **Proposed quality enhancement activities outlined in the plan are included in the narrative sections below.**

Explicit guidance on quality expectations from EEC is outlined in the Direct Service Summary and is intended to guide implementation plan development that is driven by collaboration between the LEA and ELPs in each partnership, allowing for local level flexibility. This local control ensures the plan addresses the unique needs of the specific community. All PEG grantee plans and budgets are submitted by LEAs, and then reviewed and approved by EEC staff on an annual basis. Mid-year program adjustments based on findings from a system of continuous quality improvement and monitoring are required to be documented and submitted to EEC for approval.

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through regular EEC staff attendance at local grantee meetings, as well as through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that is scheduled to occur on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by mid February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to analyze documented activities and observations of the Lead Educational Agencies (LEAs) and their oversight of the Early Learning Programs (ELPs) to ensure that federal



awards are used for the authorized purpose in compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and the provisions of contracts or grant agreements and associated performance goals are achieved. This review serves as a precursor to a formal audit that will take place later in 2016 and is intended to provide the LEAs with a clear understanding of the expectations of the grant requirements that will be monitored in the upcoming formal audit. The technical assistance review provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing support if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. In addition, the review afforded EEC the opportunity to highlight sound and innovative administration and management practices that may already be in place. Additionally, the review serves as a model for the monitoring expected to take place by the LEA in the oversight of each PEG-funded ELP partner.

### **High Staff Qualifications**

All PEG-funded classrooms have been staffed by at least one highly qualified educator since the onset of program implementation in September 2015. ELPs report that all lead educators have at least a B.A. degree in early childhood or closely related field, and all classroom instructional staff meet the appropriate credentialing requirements as outlined in the licensing regulations and policies established by the Department of Early Education and Care. In order to monitor this quality component, EEC requires that all LEAs submit all PEG classroom staff information so the level of education and certification can be verified by internal EEC teacher qualification systems.

About half of PEG-funded classrooms are staffed with educators who were already employed by the ELP in the community, and were therefore familiar with basic administrative practices and expectations for classroom quality. Due to the additional enhancements outlined in the requirements of PEG, most program staff required additional orientation, as well as training on quality components and grant monitoring and reporting expectations to ensure fidelity to the model.

*Providers in all communities talked about the heightened level of professionalism within the early childhood communities as a result of full-day, full-year, and competitive salary components of the program. Program directors of multiple sites discuss how their highly trained educators is the primary reason that students have made such significant progress.*

### **High-quality professional development for all staff**

In early education, the role and capabilities of the teacher/educator are pivotal to students' success. EEC offers educator professional development and financial supports aimed at advancing the continued development of educator skills and credentials. We partner in this work with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) as well as two- and four-year institutions of higher education in the state.

The Educator and Provider Support (EPS) grant funds a network of five regional grantees for professional development opportunities. These grantees are the state's primary vehicle through which early educators gain access to foundational professional development opportunities, including providing credit-bearing coursework, and support services including technical assistance, coaching and mentoring.

All PEG-funded programs have access to professional development through existing structures offered regionally through EEC funded EPS grantees and are participating in the QRIS system and will attend required, high quality professional development as required by existing QRIS standards over the course of the grant period. The QRIS standards include requirements for professional development aligned with core competencies as outlined by EEC and cover content related to curriculum, screening tools, assessment, supporting positive relationships, the MA Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers and/or Preschool Learning Standards, observation and documentation, working with children from diverse cultures, second language acquisition, and Improving the Quality of Health and Safety Practice: Managing Early Education and Care Settings that include Children with Allergies, Special Diets, and Specialized Feeding Issues. In addition, Preschool Expansion Grant communities have been offered access to train the trainer series on the newly adopted Massachusetts Early English Language Development Standards and the Massachusetts Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Approaches to Play and Learning (APL).

Preschool Expansion Grant programs and classrooms are allowed five program closure days for professional development, three additional closure days outside what is typically approved by EEC. In many communities,

QRIS required professional development content serves as a foundation to community-driven and developed content that is specific to the needs of the at the local level. With the support of an EEC professional development specialist, EEC encourages that PEG programs offer joint professional development for all PEG programs in a community, with a focus on content that builds the capacity of educators around best-practices in early childhood classrooms. Some report that it is challenging to plan community-wide professional development with competing priorities and requirements of existing systems, but we are addressing this need for support and content development through facilitation of local meetings.

PEG communities report that the PEG model has allowed for more individualized, high quality professional development than is typical for their other programs. Some partners attribute this success to PEG, as it is an opportunity for partners to establish a community-wide vision for professional development, by leveraging the expertise, strengths and resources of all early learning partners. For example, in two PEG communities, Boston and Springfield, where the PEG classroom curriculum aligns with the curriculum of the public schools, the LEA offers intense professional development days on a monthly basis for public school Pre-K and PEG educators on curriculum modules, with a focus on effective instructional practices.

*“Because we have all the families in one place, we are able to truly utilize and take advantage of everything the PEG grant has to offer combined with the people that it's serving and utilize their strengths” -- Lowell Site Director*

Professional development opportunities leveraged by the Preschool Expansion grant have promoted public-private partnerships across the Commonwealth. Professional learning around curriculum as noted above is an example of cross-sector coordination that is occurring throughout the state.

In addition, three grantee communities that received a Birth through Grade Three Alignment grant through the RTT-Early Learning Challenge Grant are building on system improvements at the community level for professional development of PEG and non-PEG educators. Lawrence designed and implemented a professional development opportunity for Pre-K educators in PEG, Kindergarten educators at the public school, as well as community based and public school leadership, with a focus on early literacy and developmentally appropriate expectations throughout the birth to grade three continuum and is working toward designing a standardized process between Pre-K and K to communicate about child-level developmental progress to support the transition into Kindergarten. Coordination and alignment between public and private sectors has also leveraged more informal professional learning opportunities. Holyoke convenes a professional learning community for PEG Pre-K and public school Kindergarten educators to support effective practices for small group instruction, using locally adopted early literacy indicators and classroom data as a guide.

In four of five PEG communities, the LEA provides ongoing, individualized coaching support to ELP educators as part of the PEG-funded model. In Boston, an existing coaching model is providing intensive, monthly coaching to all PEG classrooms, in coordination with coaches and mentors from some ELPs. Over the course of the grant period, the LEA hopes to build the capacity of ELP coaches so an internal structure for coaching can be established. Other communities did not have existing coaching staff available to support classrooms, so PEG funds are being used to fund at least one coach, employed by the LEA, to provide classroom support to PEG educators on a monthly basis. Although there is variation in coaching throughout the state, there is a considerable amount of consistency in coaching models, approaches and strategies. The introduction of coaching in PEG communities has elicited conversations about the significance of reflective practice, supporting effective instructional practices, and an increased focus on using curriculum content to differentiate instruction to meet every child's learning needs.

*Each community has leveraged their coaches to meet their specific needs. In Lowell, professional development surrounds improvements to the curriculum. For example, teachers and coaches have discussed better ways to integrate math into the everyday curriculum in intentional ways because they identified that as a weakness in the program. More recently, they are working on implementing writing in all interest areas, such as in science or in discovery. According to a program director in Boston, the coaches are an invaluable resource in ensuring teachers are supported in improving their practices on an ongoing basis.*

As a result of coaching and additional staffing, structures have been put in place for PEG classrooms to offer

more non-instructional time for educators, allowing for additional time to meet with coaches to discuss ongoing progress in goals, joint lesson planning with other educators, and professional learning communities for lead educators. EEC is in the initial phases of planning for a structure to support a professional learning community for PEG coaches across the state.

Additionally, all PEG-funded classrooms have an opportunity to participate in the longitudinal study of the PEG model that will provide communities with access to classroom quality and child-level data at least once per year. PEG communities are planning how they will use the data from the evaluation, along with locally collected data, to inform professional development planning for their communities and inform classroom practices. Abt Associates, the contracted research firm, is creating a statewide data platform and research briefs to make the data accessible to every community.

The PEG EEC staff have facilitated statewide grantee meetings to promote cross-community learning, respond to emerging challenges related to implementation, and build local leadership capacity. For example, in response to challenge of enrolling children in PEG-funded slots, EEC staff convened grantees in October to provide resources, a cross-sector expert panel presentation, and discussions around effective outreach and enrollment strategies for "hard to reach" families. As a result, grantee communities were connected to additional resources and contacts to support them in their ongoing enrollment and outreach efforts, and learned successful practices from other communities across the state.

The PEG EEC team is in the process of planning another statewide meeting to discuss trends in specific statewide progress in the high quality preschool components as outlined in the Preschool Expansion Grant and an opportunity to reflect and plan for implementation adjustments for year two. Additionally, EEC is in the planning stage for establishing a cross-sector professional learning series for leadership, instructional support leaders, and coaches with a focus on delivering content related to the high quality components as outlined by the Preschool Expansion Grant, including but not limited to curriculum and instruction, family engagement and inclusion.

#### **A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1**

PEG classrooms were open by September 2015, with the exception of one community that opened at the beginning of October, 2015 and the newly contracted partners in Boston that started in November. From the beginning of implementation, all PEG classrooms have maintained at least a child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1, consistent with the expectations outlined in the EEC licensing regulations. ELPs have budgeted for additional teaching staff or substitute teaching staff to be scheduled during PEG program hours to cover classrooms, allowing for more non-instructional time for teaching staff. The protected time outside of classrooms has provided lead teaching staff more curriculum planning time within classrooms and across classrooms, resulting in lesson plans that increasingly reflect individual accommodations for children with diverse needs. Non-instructional time has also allowed for time for lead instructional staff to meet with coaches to reflect on progress of established classroom goals.

#### **A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications**

PEG classrooms across the Commonwealth have all been designed and staffed to maintain a class size of no more than 20, with at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications since the beginning of the program year. In Lawrence, there are classrooms with smaller group sizes (of no more than 10 children) due to limitations in physical space and the need to maintain EEC licensing requirements. Additionally, a number of PEG-funded lead educators have a Master's degree in early childhood or a related field, and some programs report that some classrooms are staffed with more than one teacher with a Bachelor's degree. EEC has also required that lead educators be EEC teacher certified in PEG-funded classrooms. Through the monitoring process, EEC is supporting the LEA in verifying the staff qualifications in PEG-funded classrooms. In the technical assistance monitoring visit to each PEG community, EEC encouraged LEA's to conduct onsite monitoring visits to PEG-funded programs and classrooms to ensure appropriate class sizes and staff qualifications.

#### **A Full-Day Program**

*"This program is the answer to my prayers. Now my son is here all day for free, I can put my*

*youngest child with a babysitter, and I can still afford to work.”-- Parent in Lowell*

In response to the federal requirement of a full-day program, EEC required that all PEG funded classrooms offer eligible children access to full-day (eight hours), full-year (52 weeks) high-quality preschool programming. An expanded program, with up to 10 hours a day for a full calendar year provides more access for high-risk families and their children. All PEG-funded classrooms operate on an extended full-day, full-year schedule.

*These requirements also benefit children and families by ensuring students receive services during the entirety of a parent's workday. In Lawrence, the program director explained how 95 percent of parents choose the full-day, full-year program, PEG, over a shorter program. And in Lowell, one mother was brought to tears because her child was able to attend this program for free. Her mother had been staying with her to care for her children so she could work, but was returning to Korea. She could not afford childcare and because of PEG, she was able to return to work.*

PEG programs work with families who request less hours of preschool programming on an individual basis, and per EEC requirements, children in PEG funded slots must receive no fewer than six hours of PEG programming.

If a child must be pulled out of the classroom for special education services, no less than six hours of the program day should take place in the PEG-funded classroom. If pull-out for special education services would result in less than a six hour day, community partners must work toward a plan to provide services for the child. In all situations, the best interest of the child and family must be considered. Preschool services can be offered during non-traditional hours if deemed needed by the grantee community.

*“Thank you for not making me choose between child care and putting food on the table” -  
Parent in Lawrence*

#### **Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities**

As part of the Direct Service Summary (DSS), EEC requires that all PEG grantees create and implement plans for services provided for four year old children to be reflective of services and supports that include all children, including children with disabilities, children who are English language learners, children who are experiencing homelessness, children from refugee and immigrant families, children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and children from military families. Programs are required to plan for curriculum, instruction and assessment practices that are designed to include appropriate accommodations, modifications and individualized supports so the needs of all children are met.

Historically, while many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority have received their special education services in public school settings. As a result, the infrastructure didn't always exist to serve children in community-based settings. However, as the PEG sites were identified and in many cases designed, communities were in a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings and many proposed collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff work side by side to support all children, including eligible children with disabilities. LEA and ELP staff meet regularly and as part of these meetings, the communities have been building the process for referring children for whom there may be concerns about development. These conversations also provide opportunities for LEAs and ELPs to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, with or without an IEP, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, should the child be identified as eligible.

In Springfield, many PEG classrooms are located in a public school-owned building alongside public school preschool classrooms; in Holyoke, the ELP classrooms are co-located in elementary school buildings that also house public school preschool classrooms as well as K-8 classrooms. Given that the public school special education staff work with the public preschool classrooms, this model of co-locating classrooms has provided an opportunity to align services for children with disabilities as the staff can work together across public and community-based programs to directly deliver early childhood special education services, provide consultation services with ELP staff and/or to work together to proactively address the healthy growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

*In Springfield, the public school district, along with the private partners, hired a team of*



*behavioral, occupational therapy, and speech and language specialists to visit the PEG classrooms on a regular basis and provide support and assistance to teachers directly. To give a specific example, there was a boy who had been enrolled in an early intervention program and was going through the screening process, but left the program before the process could be completed. He enrolled in a PEG program and within a few weeks, the provider brought in an autism specialist to accompany the behavioral, OT, and speech team, and collectively they facilitated the referral and screening process. Today the child is receiving two hours of support daily at the public school site that is housed in the same building as the PEG program.*

At the ELP site, the expectation is that 6.9 percent of children served will be children with disabilities (this target is derived from the statewide percentage of children with disabilities, as this is larger than the federal percentage). There are two primary challenges that Massachusetts has faced in serving children with disabilities in PDG classrooms.

The first is that the majority of children with disabilities in Massachusetts receive their IEP services from the public schools in public school settings. As can be gleaned from Indicator 6 data, while over 70 percent of children with disabilities receive their IEP services in partial or full inclusion settings, the majority of those services are delivered in inclusive public school settings. As a result, we expect that a large percentage of children with IEPs in these communities are already enrolled in public school inclusion classrooms. We also recognize that children are enrolled in multiple settings and, as such, LEAs build transportation into IEP services in order to ensure that children can access their services and also access PEG programs.

The second challenge is that, when conducting outreach and enrolling children in PDG slots, Massachusetts prioritized children who are not currently enrolled in any formal early childhood classroom. This resulted in two outcomes: first, children already enrolled in public school settings, including children with disabilities, were not eligible. Second, since the children enrolled in the PDG classrooms had not been in an early childhood setting prior to enrollment, it was more than likely that they had not intersected with the formal early childhood system at all, including special education. As a result, PDG educators spent the fall observing children and determining whether a need for referral for a special education evaluation and determination of eligibility exists.

Comprehensive services such as OT, PT and speech help to proactively respond to children who may be behind developmentally and may serve to avoid referral to special education. Whether a child currently has an IEP, has been referred to special education for an evaluation or is being observed to determine whether a referral is necessary, these comprehensive services are critical to better understand where a child is in his/her development and to ensure that time to support development and learning is not lost during the referral and eligibility determination processes. Communities like Springfield and Lawrence have been focused on ensuring that all children have access to services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy.

Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of these comprehensive services will support the children to make process and ultimately, result in *fewer* referrals to special education. Due to these factors, we expect that the 6.9 percent threshold is more likely to be met toward the end of the program year (August 2016).

When children currently in PDG classrooms have an IEP, they receive their early childhood special education services in public school settings. Going forward DESE will be working with the special education departments in our five districts to ensure that the PEG programs, all of which are community-based settings, are considered when decisions about the Least Restrictive Environment are made. We are also encouraging communities to consider how they might wrap PEG programs around currently operating public school inclusion classrooms, as these often only run 2 hours a day. The public schools will continue to provide all other identified IEP services.

As PEG programs are being considered as decisions are made about the Least Restrictive Environment, EEC and ESE are also working to ensure that educators in PEG classrooms have the appropriate training and supports to serve children with disabilities. The Department of Early Education and Care, in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Administration for Children and Families, is developing a professional development series on inclusion using the Preschool Inclusion Tool Kit as well as feedback from the five communities on challenges related to inclusion to guide the topics of the series. This joint professional development will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the work of the early childhood field to successfully include children with disabilities in all settings, including community-based programs. Our first meeting with communities is scheduled for April 29, 2016. At the local level, communities like Holyoke, Lowell

and Springfield have offered, or plan to offer joint professional development opportunities to educators around the referral and IEP process and how to adjust instructional practices to meet accommodations outlined in the IEP.

**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**

EEC requires that efforts focused on this quality indicator should ensure that preschool curricula are age appropriate, aligned to the MA curriculum Frameworks and integrated across content areas. Additionally, PEG requires that implementation of curricula should be reflective of instructional approaches that are appropriate and supportive of the ways in which four year-old children learn.

In an effort to be responsive to the variation across communities, EEC has encouraged PEG grantees to select a curriculum that meets the needs of the specific community and aligns with a community-wide vision to support Kindergarten readiness.

*The focus on curriculum in these PEG classrooms has added an increased academic focus to the experience of these preschool children to better prepare them to enter Kindergarten. While this is the first cohort of students to experience the PEG model, providers are incredibly pleased with progress so far and confident that their children will be more ready to enter the school system as a result of this programming.*

In response to this requirement, two PEG communities have adopted curriculum for PEG classrooms that aligns with the public school early childhood programs (Pre-K and Kindergarten). Springfield and Boston implement curriculum in the PEG classrooms that is also being utilized by public Pre-K classrooms. These communities have offered professional development to all educators at the beginning of the school year and continues to support curriculum implementation through onsite coaching provided by the LEA.

*In Boston, Boston Public Schools instructional coaches and a community director worked to revise the pre-existing Boston KIDS curriculum to make improvements and to address the inclusion of diversity in subtle ways. For example, when learning about colors, students also study “the colors of us”, exploring the colors they see in their families and other people around the world. Providers have noted that this new curriculum is more engaging to students and as a result has reduced behavioral issues, a huge benefit to students.*

*In Springfield, as a result of their success with consistency of curriculum in the PEG model, a private foundation in the city has agreed to fund the purchase of the same curriculum in other non-PEG programs to support alignment to the public school. The Big Day Curriculum in Springfield has assisted in the academic progress students have made. While few students entered the year with knowledge about colors, students are now clapping out the syllables in words and expanding their vocabulary. Springfield PEG classrooms have seen huge impacts for all students, but especially for students who lacked English proficiency. Within a month of her arrival from Puerto Rico, one student had progressed from no English skills to being able to complete all academic tasks that kids are asked to do in English. The academic skills these students are acquiring as a result of this programming is helping to set them up for future success in schools and beyond.*

Alternatively, other grantee communities have selected to remain with or expand upon curricula already being used by their non-PEG funded classrooms and have been historically used by their organizations.

*In Lowell, teachers intentionally work to mold the curriculum to children's interests. For example, while all students may be studying balls, one classroom was excited about how balls bounce, another was interested by the different type of balls, and a third was curious about where ball shapes exist in the real world. Each classroom demonstrated their findings on a bulletin board outside their classroom. Students and parents then took a tour of the hallways to learn from each other. The provider reports that the flexibility of the curriculum in Lowell has allowed teachers to improve the learning experience of their preschool children.*

Regardless of the curriculum selected, it is a statewide requirement that all curriculum are aligned with State



Early Learning and Development Standards and Curriculum frameworks as set out by EEC and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

As of the beginning of the grant period, all PEG programs meet all EEC licensing requirements for health and safety standards. Additionally, each PEG partner will seek and maintain NAEYC accreditation and QRIS level 3 or seek and maintain QRIS level 4 by the end of the grant period. QRIS program participation provides a structure to monitor and support appropriate learning environments and quality improvement efforts as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), and either the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or the Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale. The nature, context and content of interactions between the educators and children will be measured in the evaluation/longitudinal study and participation in the QRIS by tools such as the CLASS and ECERS. Data collection for the evaluation of the PEG program began in early February, and classroom quality data is projected to be available in Spring 2016. EEC plans to work with individual communities to ensure the classroom quality data is being used to support classrooms and programs in continuous quality improvement and to inform program implementation as it relates to curriculum and classroom learning environments.

### **Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities**

As part of a cross-agency collaboration, Massachusetts adopted the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid model, providing a policy-level structure to support all programs in the mixed-delivery system an opportunity to understand and implement practices that support the individual needs of children, specifically around social and emotional development. Intensive professional development around the CSEFEL model is offered to the mixed-delivery system, as well as members of the PEG programs. As a result, many PEG programs across the state use the model as a guide and integrate components in professional development opportunities for educators, family engagement staff and comprehensive service providers.

To ensure that all PEG programs are providing individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities, EEC requires PEG programs to create and submit a plan for assessing the quality of the preschool opportunities and the progress of children across developmental domains as a critical component of the standards-curriculum-instruction-assessment continuum through the implementation of Teaching Strategies Gold. Having systems in place to use data gathered from the comprehensive assessment system to inform continuous program improvement and instructional supports for children is key and is a requirement of the PEG grant in each community.

As part of a comprehensive assessment system, PEG communities use a screening tool to determine individual needs and developmental milestones of children and use this data to inform instruction and refer children to additional screening if needed. EEC has allowed flexibility at the local level to determine the most appropriate tool. Some communities are also in the process of identifying and implementing a home language screening tool for children.

Teaching Strategies Gold is the required formative assessment tool statewide for the Preschool Expansion Grant. Communities are working toward using the data collected to inform instruction and professional development for PEG educators at a local level, taking into account the needs of diverse learners, and this process is supporting identification of professional development topics related to assessment at a statewide level. PEG communities are in the early stages of creating strategies to share data with Kindergarten teachers at the community level at the end of the PEG school year in August 2016. Initial PEG community planning include discussions around what information about children's development would be helpful to share, the appropriate platform to share the data, and what professional development is needed to support teachers in the use of the data.

### **Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff**

All PEG funded lead educator salaries are commensurate to the public school Pre-K educators. In most cases, this is a significant increase in salary, with the exception of some full-day Head Start programs where the salary increase is only slightly higher in PEG. ELPs in PEG communities report that identifying and hiring highly-qualified staff for PEG classrooms proved to be a challenge, as there is a shortage of highly qualified staff available in the general early childhood community in Massachusetts. Partners report that in their non-PEG funded programs, they encounter similar staffing challenges. We believe that by providing PEG educators a

salary commensurate with the public school, we can anticipate increased staff retention in PEG-funded classrooms, allowing consistency and increased continuity of care for eligible children, a structure to implement a process of continuous quality improvement in PEG classrooms, and additional opportunities to build competency and overall capacity of classroom educators through ongoing professional development. Salaries of instructional staff in PEG classrooms is being monitored throughout the grant period.

Specific challenges related to the definition of commensurate salaries have come into view in the first year of Preschool Expansion Grant implementation. Although the base salary of PEG educators is comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff, the actual relative compensation of the full-time, full-year PEG educators is less than the public school staff when broken down to an hourly rate. Local K-12 instructional staff work fewer hours per day and only nine months per year, compared to the PEG educators who work longer hours per day for the entire calendar year. In communities like Springfield where the PEG classrooms are in the same building as public school Pre-K classrooms that are not PEG funded, the PEG educators notice this discrepancy and in some instances, have inquired with Springfield public school leadership about open teaching positions in the district because the compensation and benefit package is better. In planning conversations for year two of PEG, EEC continues to encourage communities to consider step increases in salary over the four-year grant period to address this challenge.

*“When the funding goes away, at least one teacher will be going away, probably from the field. That’s a very real concern, what are we going to do to sustain these teachers when that funding is gone?”-- Boston Site Director*

Community-based providers with PEG funded and existing non-PEG funded classrooms in the same facility often discuss the morale challenges they face when their non-PEG funded classrooms, staffed with educators who are not being as highly compensated as PEG educators, recognize the discrepancy in salary. In anticipation of this challenge, two PEG communities decided to locate all PEG-funded classrooms in a separate location from their other community-based programs.

### **Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement**

EEC posted a Request for Response (RFR) in September 2015 to contract with a vendor to perform a multi-component longitudinal evaluation of the use of PEG funds in Massachusetts, to learn from the communities implementing the PEG grant, support quality improvement at the local level, and inform decisions about sustaining and expanding programs and policies developed through this grant.

Abt Associates, a research firm located in Cambridge, MA, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Boston, was awarded a contract to implement the evaluation beginning in January 2016. Abt is working closely with the EEC PEG team to plan and inform the implementation of the evaluation.

Over the years of PEG funding, the multi-component evaluation plan includes: 1) a formative evaluation of PEG implementation and PEG-participating children's development, 2) an evaluation of the impacts (short-term and longitudinal) of PEG programs on children and families, and 3) an analysis of the costs of the quality improvements with preliminary estimates of cost-effectiveness.

In the first year, EEC is particularly interested in understanding: how each grantee is implementing their PEG programs; how implementation of PEG requirements distinguishes PEG classrooms and teachers from non-PEG classrooms in similar programs in the community; how PEG participation has shaped programs; what PEG implementation and associated inter-agency collaborations require of ELPs and LEAs; what approaches to collaboration and leadership are most effective; and the needs and skills of the population PEG programs serve. Research will focus on the following three key areas of PEG quality improvements:

- Teacher qualifications, compensation, professional development support and classroom quality;
- Comprehensive services and family engagement strategies; and
- Public-private collaboration to support sustained expansion of high-quality services.

In the first year of the evaluation, EEC plans to provide PEG grantees with opportunities to work across communities and within communities to improve data-literacy among stakeholders and use data to inform

implementation plans and budgets for year two.

As part of the evaluation, there is also interest in understanding who is choosing to attend PEG classrooms, the areas of strengths and challenges in these children's development and the growth that occurs during PEG participation into elementary school. In years two and beyond, EEC is also interested in evaluating impacts and understanding the cost of quality improvements, in addition to continued monitoring of implementation.

*I just wanted to let you know that when I was handing out the letters to the parents about the researchers coming to do observations in the classroom and that they would also be looking for parent feedback EVERY parent in D's room said that they would be happy to give feedback. They told me that they love the program and the Teachers and would be happy to tell the state how much they love their teacher and her classroom, and how happy their child is in the program, and how much they are learning. There were three or four that were more vocal about it than others but the sentiment was the same.-Email from a Program Director in Springfield*

### **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**

*“So much power lies in the relationships you build with families. When you have a relationship with the family, you have built trust and strengthened the line of communication. Families are affirmed and engage more in the education of their child.” -- Holyoke Site Director*

Plans to deliver high-quality comprehensive services and community and family engagement strategies have been required of all PEG grantee communities from the beginning stages of the implementation year. Like other PEG-required high quality preschool program indicators, EEC provided guidance in the Direct Service Summary tool to every grant community with the expectation that each community develop and submit a plan and budget that meet expected programmatic enhancements.

All Preschool Expansion Grant communities include a Head Start partner and many communities have adopted components of family engagement and comprehensive service strategies based on the Head Start model. Additionally, as part of the Quality Rating and Improvement System, programs are required to be trained in and adopt the Strengthening Families framework. In most non-Head Start community based organizations, offering a menu of comprehensive services at this level is a new practice. There is a significant amount of variation in community level plans to offer comprehensive services, as some services are being offered directly by the LEA partner, some via PEG funds, some accessed via other EEC-grant funded initiatives and others are contracting services to existing community vendors. Grantees report that these additional services allow for greater access to specialized support staff, including but not limited to literacy specialists, mental health consultants, nurses, occupational therapists, vision and screening services, and speech therapists.

*For example, one of the students had recently arrived from the Dominican Republic, and the on-site nurse and teachers identified that this student had a number of medical needs that were impacting his academic abilities. The nurse worked closely with the family to connect this student with the services he required by attending doctor appointments with the child's mother to bridge the language barrier, ask the right questions, and advocate for the child and his mother in their time of need.*

*In Lowell, family support specialists, through home visits, have identified specific needs and brought in providers to do free eye screenings and dental screenings.*

*Also in Lowell, there was a student who was proving to be a behavioral challenge to his teachers. He expressed his emotions through his actions, so when he was angry and upset, he would throw himself to the ground or act out violently towards his peers. One of the on-site instructional coaches had extensive special education training and supported the teacher in identifying the child's needs. The Lowell public school expedited the screening process and within three months, the child had hearing aids and was enrolled in services at the public school. The child is now learning how to express his emotions and feelings in a productive manner as his hearing needs have been met. The child's mother was included throughout the process and has become an advocate for ensuring that when he enters*

Kindergarten, he will continue to get the right services.

*-Per Interview with Lowell PEG staff*

*We have a single mother at the Sullivan site who just moved here from Puerto Rico a few months before starting our program. She doesn't speak any English. She had been staying with a relative in a very cramped space with her 2 kids. A has been working very closely with this mom and providing her support and encouragement as she faces many challenges in her life. A arranged for her to volunteer at the school in the school office as well as in out Pre-k classroom. She made phone calls to transitional assistance and spends time with her daily listening and providing support and encouragement. Recently she was kicked out of the relatives house that she was staying at and had nowhere to go. A was on vacation in Florida so this mom went to E for help. E looked into what this mom needed to do immediately to find shelter that same day. She helped her by contacting B to find out what steps needed to be taken, wrote a letter stating that she had nowhere to go and gave this mom specific instructions on what she needed to do and where she needed to go. She maintained contact with her throughout the day and by the end of the day she was placed in the shelter on Sargeant St.*

*At the Morgan site we have a single mom who is also homeless and living in the shelter on Sargeant Street. This mom has no support system and no family. She walks her child to and from school every day but has a very difficult time due to lack of weather appropriate clothing. She would stay for long lengths of time at the school as she showed signs of isolation and loneliness. This mom stated she was at risk of losing her placement in the shelter if she didn't find a job. When she would come in to the school her clothes were dirty and torn. A and M did a home visit to offer her support and also provided her and her daughter with clothes. Since then she has been applying for jobs, wearing the clothes that were provided to her and really looking great! A parent support group will begin next week at Morgan and was created after seeing how isolated this parent is and how she needs to have a support system in Holyoke.*

*- Holyoke family support staff*

Various technical assistance providers working with children and families in PEG programs has led to local level efforts to coordinate the team of technical assistance providers available to staff in the early care and education programs.

In EEC's recent technical assistance and monitoring visits to grantee communities, many partners indicated the significance of these services on the overall health and wellbeing of children and families in their programs, but that the implementation of comprehensive services has been challenging. Most PEG communities currently offer these services to families but report that they plan to expand and streamline these services to more adequately meet the need of children and families in year two, and will need to adjust their budgets accordingly. Most PEG communities planned to phase in comprehensive services in year one, to allow them time to develop a plan for services based on what they learn about the needs of the children in the first few months of programming, with the goal of providing a full menu of comprehensive services by December 2015. All communities have discussed the ongoing challenges in providing these services to children, highlighting the challenge of creating a streamlined process for creating access to services for children who are in various ELPs in one grantee community. EEC staff are supporting communities through ongoing technical assistance and attendance at monthly grantee meetings to ensure comprehensive services are being adequately funded and accessible moving forward.

Every Preschool Expansion Grant community currently engages with local EEC-funded Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) specialists and other community partners to conduct outreach and provide support to educators working with families enrolled in the community partner programs, with a particular focus



on outreach strategies for hard-to-reach children and families, including those not currently served by early education and care programs. Toward these efforts, all PEG grantee communities have hired at least one family engagement specialist to work directly with families of PEG-funded children. In most communities, the family engagement staff are bilingual and support families with translated materials and resources. Family engagement staff in each community work collaboratively with educators and leadership of public schools and community based providers to define and implement a community-level strategy to integrate family engagement strategies throughout the preschool programs. Although there is a significant amount of variation in the intensity and frequency of family engagement activities in PEG communities, PEG communities strive to meet families individual needs as much as possible. The following activities are common practices across the PEG grantees. Specific anecdotal information from the communities highlights specific examples.

- Creating local systems to support family engagement strategies

*In Boston, one provider expressed how they set aside time each week to discuss specific families that their program serves and how they can continue to build relationships that support their families and children. Springfield has created a family engagement sub-committee, comprised of leadership from the LEA and ELP, to create a plan and streamlined approach to family engagement. Boston is also working towards creating a sub-committee focused on family and community engagement that can work to share strategies between the 17 classrooms and each of the 9 providers in their region.*

- "Parent/Family Night" - Families are invited to the program to engage in curriculum related activities with their children in the classroom/program setting. Families are also provided resources related to the curriculum to extend children's learning to the home environment
- Supporting literacy through resources and community events- Family engagement staff offer events to educate parents and families on the importance of language and literacy development.

*In Springfield and Holyoke, the PEG providers partnered with local public libraries to host a Literacy Story Walk in each community. Based on the Vermont model of a Story Walk, pages of a book were copied, laminated and pasted around an outdoor space for children and their families walked around and read. The public library also used that opportunity to help families register for library cards so families could continue to use all the resources the library has to offer, including computer services and education classes for parents.*

*In Lawrence, one classroom partnered with Raising a Reader to send children home with books to encourage literacy development at home. Parents have been incredibly grateful of this opportunity and Lawrence is looking to expand this partnership to serve more classrooms in future years.*

- Parent/Family information sessions - Program staff invite families to sessions on topics of interest based on a family needs assessment. Topics include but are not limited to financial literacy, safety practices for the home, and developmentally appropriate expectations

*In Lowell, Family Support Specialists host "Coffeehouse Events" in which they educate parents on developmental milestones they can look for in their children.*

*In Lawrence, the providers have partnered with UMass-Amherst Nutrition Extension to educate parents about proper nutrition guidelines and the importance of physical activity and exercise.*

- Supporting families in their transition to Kindergarten

*The public-private partnership has fundamentally facilitated the process of Kindergarten registration for families. In the Lowell and Holyoke communities, the providers held an on-site Kindergarten registration night in which program directors, teachers, and staff were available to answer questions and assist with the process of registration and completing paperwork for the public schools. In Springfield, in addition to holding a registration night at the public school, parents had the opportunity to schedule one-on-one meetings with PEG staff to discuss the Kindergarten transition and what options the parent had during the enrollment process. In*



*Boston and Holyoke, the providers are in the planning phases for a “Countdown to Kindergarten” event for students and families to meet with their Kindergarten teachers to facilitate the transition.*

*In Lawrence, the family engagement specialists are discussing Kindergarten and filling out the registration paperwork with the parents during home visits. PEG directors are additionally working proactively to set up processes of data sharing between the pre-K and Kindergarten sites to ensure a smooth transition.*

- Home visits - Family engagement staff and educators develop plans to facilitate outreach to families in the home at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needed. The frequency and strategies implemented vary between programs and communities, but programs offer families information about child development and age-appropriate expectations
- Newsletters and Parent message boards - Programs create documents that include program highlights and tips for parents
- Connecting families to each other for support

*In Lowell, a new immigrant family speaking only Swahili was connected with another family who spoke Swahili family and was therefore able to feel connected to the program despite the difficult language barrier. Springfield and Holyoke also host monthly parent socials to connect families to each other to facilitate play dates and carpooling opportunities.*

- Open House - Families are invited to the child's program at the beginning of the school year in an effort to support the transition into the program
- Community-based resources - PEG programs connect families to resources in their community

*In Lawrence, family advocates met with a mother who desired to go back and earn her GED. However, because she had another younger child, she was not able to do so. The family advocate assisted her in applying for a voucher so that she now pursues her own education while her youngest child is with a family care provider. There is a palpable team mentality towards helping families, exemplified through the support structures built into organizations to address housing, food, transportation, and education needs. Parents and families have access to 75-80 percent of available service provisions in the local community. By impacting all members of families, PEG is truly transforming the lives of families and shaping its communities.*

- Using technology to connect with families

*In Lowell, teachers regularly use technology to connect with their families. Recognizing that many of their families do not have access to the internet, but do have phones which can receive text messages, Lowell teachers are using a secure program called Kambu, which allows them to quickly and easily send out short daily updates to their families via text messaging. Families receive pictures of their children with captions such as, “We're working on patterning today, look what I just built!”. These messages detail the activity on which their child is working and parents are able to respond with encouraging notes. For parents without texting plans, teachers print out these photos and send them home at the end of each day with children. Holyoke also uses a similar text messaging service to communicate with families including sharing literacy tips and reminding families about school openings and closings. This service has created a dialogue in which parents in Holyoke ask clarifying questions to ensure they can best help their children at home.*

### **Evidence-based health and safety standards**

Quality program standards, including evidence-based health and safety standards, for all early care and education settings have been adopted by the Commonwealth. These include EEC licensing of preschool programs, the MA QRIS, Federal Head Start Performance Standards, and NAEYC accreditation standards. The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care licensing regulations are recognized as some of the most ambitious in the country. Ensuring all programs are frequently monitored and well-supported is crucial to the health and

safety of children, and to align the state's monitoring performance with its robust regulations, EEC is in the process of developing new differential monitoring processes that will maximize the utilization of agency staff, enable more frequent interaction between EEC staff and programs, and acquire additional licensing staff to improve caseload ratios.

### Creating a Basis of Evidence

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care is developing a four-part process for creating a basis of evidence to analyze and evaluate program implementation, continuous program improvement, and program quality results that includes;

- regular EEC attendance at local grantee meetings,
- longitudinal evaluation,
- fiscal and program audits, and
- regional monitoring teams

Through this infrastructure, as described in greater detail below, EEC will support LEA and ELP implementation plans through a system to monitor preschool program quality.

### **EEC attendance at local grantee meetings**

Since the earliest stages of implementation, EEC's PEG-funded staff have supported LEAs and ELPs in the development of their local PEG programs. As stated earlier in this report, EEC staff have at times served in a role of a mediator and at other times have delivered needed answers to policy questions generated as programs looked for guidance on allowable implementation practice. As a result of this local-level support EEC has been able to turn around pages of answers to implementation questions and is in the process of turning these written Q&A documents into a PEG Implementation Guide.

### **Longitudinal Evaluation**

The Preschool Expansion Grant Evaluation started in January 2016. Over the years of PEG funding, the multi-component evaluation plan includes: 1) a formative evaluation of PEG implementation and PEG-participating children's development, 2) an evaluation of the impacts (short-term and longitudinal) of PEG programs on children and families, and 3) an analysis of the costs of the quality improvements with preliminary estimates of cost-effectiveness.

In the first year, EEC is particularly interested in understanding: how each grantee is implementing their PEG programs; how implementation of PEG requirements distinguishes PEG classrooms and teachers from non-PEG classrooms in similar programs in the community; how PEG participation has shaped programs; what PEG implementation and associated inter-agency collaborations require of ELPs and LEAs; what approaches to collaboration and leadership are most effective; and the needs and skills of the population PEG programs serve. In the first year of the evaluation, EEC plans to provide PEG grantees with opportunities to work across communities and within communities to improve data-literacy among stakeholders and expect communities to use data to inform implementation plans and budgets for year two. EEC is working closely with the evaluation team to analyze data aggregated at a statewide level to inform policy and programmatic expectations for the Preschool Expansion Grant.

### **Fiscal and Program Audits**

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) requires that all PEG-funded LEA and ELP partners in each community complete a Direct Service Summary (DSS) document to outline an implementation plan for High-Quality Preschool Programs for eligible children in five high-need communities in the Commonwealth. All quality criteria listed above are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services that will support four year old children in developing critical development and learning competencies needed for successful learning. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and through the National Association for the Education of

Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation and include the HQPP expectations from the USDOE.

Explicit guidance on quality expectations from EEC is outlined in the Direct Service Summary document and is intended to guide implementation plan development, driven by collaboration between the LEA and ELPs in each partnership, allowing for local level flexibility to ensure the plan addresses the unique needs of the community. All PEG grantee plans (and budgets) are submitted, and reviewed and approved by EEC staff on an annual basis. Mid-year program adjustments are required to be documented and submitted to EEC for approval.

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through regular EEC staff attendance at local grantee meetings, as well as through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that is scheduled to occur on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by mid February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to review the activities of the Lead Educational Agencies (LEAs) and their oversight of the Early Learning Programs (ELPs) to ensure that federal awards are used for the authorized purpose in compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and the provisions of contracts or grant agreements and those performance goals are achieved. This review serves as a precursor to a formal audit that will take place later this year and is intended to provide the LEA with a clear understanding of the expectations of the grant requirements that will be monitored in an upcoming formal audit.

The review provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing technical assistance if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. In addition, the review afforded EEC the opportunity to highlight sound and innovative administration and management practices that may already be in place. Additionally, the review serves as a model for the monitoring expected to take place by the LEA in the oversight of each PEG-funded ELP partner.

As a follow-up to the technical assistance and monitoring process, meetings have been scheduled with the Superintendent of the LEA and the executive leadership of the community based partners to discuss the findings of the technical assistance and monitoring visits and reestablish the connection with leadership in each community. EEC is in the initial phase of planning for a statewide meeting with grantees to share effective practices from the technical assistance monitoring visits and discuss implications for implementation requirements in year two.

### **Regional Monitoring Teams**

Three Regional Monitoring Teams (RMTs), one in each participating community, will consist of a EEC Regional Director or designee, the, regional staff currently responsible for oversight of related state funded grant activities, and current Grantees of services. The teams will report to the Project Director and have direct oversight of the LEAs and their EEC-licensed ELPs through a DEEC-approved MOU. The RMTs will assess progress on grant milestones in each community and develop specific Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plans as needed, to include progress towards securing comprehensive services, family and community engagement, and creating a comprehensive public-private early childhood system as part of the local preschool to Grade 3 continuum. EEC recently held a meeting with the EEC Regional Directors in order to gather their input on the design of the RMTs and expects that the RMT's work will be fully implemented by the end of 2016.

### **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.

All High-Quality Preschool Program slots for the eligible children reported in Table 6 are considered new preschool slots, as Massachusetts focused on expanding access to preschool rather than improving quality in

existing state-funded classrooms. None of the PEG-funded classrooms were supported by any of the grant funding that EEC has considered its key support for state preschool. Expenses that contribute to the cost per slot are based on the remaining amount total funds available for grantee communities to serve eligible children (\$14,250,000), after subtracting the LEA funding contribution to the PEG longitudinal evaluation (\$648,617.00). The remaining sum after this calculation (\$13,601,383), divided by the number of eligible children to be served in new preschool slots (755 children), results in the cost per slot indicated in Table 6. Because Boston decided to braid funding streams, the cost per child has been slightly lower than the estimate in the approved application.

### 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.

Local partnerships provide the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's plan. Each LEA serves as the state's subgrantee for funding. These LEAs then subcontract with local community-based providers, the ELPs, to serve children and families and are responsible for disbursing funds and monitoring program activity. EEC monitors the LEAs and has provided technical assistance in their monitoring of the ELPs. Although EEC will not formally audit programs until the spring 2016, in December and January, the agency held "technical assistance" audit visits during which EEC fiscal and program staff went out to each LEA and reviewed the documentation that will be required in a formal audit. EEC then followed up with a letter that summarized the recommendations for improvements in the process and documentation, and provided guidance for how to replicate this process with each ELP. EEC is currently in the process of completing meetings with the Superintendent of each school district, the EEC Commissioner, PEG staff and ELP leadership to discuss the findings of the technical assistance audit, overall progress made in year one and plans for adaptations that might be made in year two.

The ELPs provide the vast majority of the direct services to children, with the LEA providing oversight and coordination of the planning and implementation. In addition, some LEAs have also decided to provide professional development supports, such as coaching around a curriculum selected by the public schools (Boston and Springfield) or Professional Learning Communities that bring together PEG and public school early childhood teachers (Holyoke).

The collaborations between the public schools and service providers have supported organized and focused planning around the transition to Kindergarten. While details of this process are being worked at the time of the writing of this report, some key components are being discussed include;

- organized Kindergarten registration events held jointly between PEG programs and the public schools,
- records review to ascertain if the PEG programs already have on file information that is needed for Kindergarten registration that can be sent directly to the school district,
- planning for sharing of information between PEG teachers and Kindergarten teachers,
- opportunities for visits to next year's school (when at a different location),

Attention is also being paid to identifying new ways that the resources of each program, the public schools and EEC can be leveraged to increase the connections with families of children three years old and younger and conveying to them information about the PEG programs and the importance of prekindergarten.

Each community made their own decisions about the best organization of resources, given the expertise and capacity of each partner.

- In Lawrence, for example, a very strong charter school network that has invested a great deal in its own internal professional development efforts has taken the lead on organizing joint professional learning activities, both with the other PEG partner and with public school teachers as well.
- In Springfield and Boston, the public school has chosen a curriculum and provided coaching in the use of the curriculum.
- Across all communities, the ELPs are taking the lead in organizing professional development to meet the requirements of QRIS.



Communities also vary in the organization of their programs.

- In Lowell and Springfield, the collaboration decided to open a jointly run program in a new space. In Lowell, the space has been provided by one of the ELPs while in Springfield it is being run by the Springfield Public Schools.
- In Lawrence, two new spaces have been opened, each run by one of the ELPs, and the enrollment process has been centralized through Lawrence Public Schools.
- In Boston, each provider is braiding PEG funds with subsidy and Head Start funding to expand the day and improve quality in the current programs. This has allowed them to build more socio-economically integrated classes and reduce the amount per child being funded through PEG.

The collaborative approach and the ability to plan locally has allowed each community to think creatively about the best ways to build on prior collaborations around early childhood education in the community. The varied nature of the programs in each community reflect the different landscape and needs in each. Additionally, this flexibility has allowed for the braiding of PEG, subsidy and Head Start funding in Boston, which reduced the cost per child.

Each subgrantee community was chosen in part due the high level of needs of children in the community. As a result, ELPs and LEAs have experience serving children with high needs including English Language Learners, homeless children and children in foster care. Programs are able to continue the high quality services that they have always provided to these families, while also sharing best practices amongst each other.

- In Lawrence, the question of when to assess children's language status has prompted a lively discussion. Lawrence Public Schools has determined that children evaluated in a PEG program will not have to be reevaluated in LPS as language screening tools will be used by PEG programs in the spring.
- The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness has been used to provide guidance around the resident requirements for these programs and have allowed programs to be flexible in enrollment. As of December 2015, thirty-seven of the children being served are known to be homeless, and instable housing and associated attendance problems have also been reported anecdotally across the communities.

As the programs mature, the integration of services and search for opportunities to reduce costs through more efficient collaboration continue. Comprehensive services is one area that has proven more expensive for programs than originally planned, for example. Originally, each program planned to use contractors with whom they already had relationships to provide comprehensive services, with the exception of Springfield where the public school hired a behavioral health specialist, on OT and a speech pathologist to augment other services provided by programs. Now conversations are occurring in each community about alternatives. In particular, programs are considering whether they can pool funds to hire staff collectively, or to fund the use of Head Start staff, such as a nurse or a behavioral specialist. As trust grows, programs are developing a greater willingness to reorganize budgets to support more efficient and cost effective provision of services.

Additionally, the fact that the public schools, who provide services for children with IEPs, are part of the collaboration has supported conversations about the best ways to ensure children in community programs receive services. Historically, children have been transported to public schools for services and, for those with education in an inclusive setting as part of their IEP, attended public school run prekindergarten classrooms with typically functioning peers. The needs of PEG partners have prompted the collaborations to address these issues. Due to the complexity of the issue, communities are slowly considering solutions such as finding ways to provide services on-site in community programs, wrapping attendance in a PEG classroom around the 2 hour inclusion classes run by the public school and providing training and support from the public school in the identification and referral process. Although the numbers of PEG children with IEPs as of December 1 was lower than the target of 6.9 percent, we expect this amount to increase this year and to find even more effective ways to integrate services next year to improve the percentage even further. Firstly, since most children who could enter PEG with an IEP are likely to be enrolled in a formal early education program in the public school during their three year old year, these children are generally ineligible for PEG in four communities. Therefore, our expectation is that PEG will provide an opportunity to identify needs among children who had not before

engaged with the system. This identification process, if done properly, should be thoughtful and we do not expect that it will happen quickly. Therefore, we will not know until the end of this year, how many children currently enrolled in the PEG program qualify for special education. Although only two percent of our enrolled children had been identified as eligible for special education services at the writing of this report, a significant number are going through the referral process. Next year, we hope that programs will examine new ways to align PEG funded services with inclusion classrooms being run by the public school. Doing so should significantly increase the number of special education services and the integration of these classes.

Multiple forces are shaping the programs' professional development needs, including individual agency requirements for staff orientation and training, EEC requirements for progress through the QRIS system and community decisions around professional development related to curriculum implementation or other efforts to align practice across all community programs. Communities are developing subcommittees under the leadership of the state's professional development specialist to organize their planning. By collaborating they can save money on trainings that may not be needed by many people in any one program but be needed by enough people in the community to support on-site training. They are also able to better coordinate the joint professional development activities to ensure they are not interfering with other training and coaching that may be occurring in each site.

#### **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).

In the summer of 2013, prior to receiving PEG funds, Massachusetts applied for a grant through the National Governor's Association (NGA), *Policy Academy-State Strategies to Improve Early Learning Outcomes*. This funding provided Massachusetts with an opportunity to draft a comprehensive Birth to Grade 3 Policy Framework, and formalize structures for collaboration and coordination of early learning policies and programs through the creation of a cross-sector NGA Policy state team, representative of all three state agencies under the Education Secretariat (Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education), as well as early childhood partners.

In the spring of 2015, the team expanded to include additional representation from our state's education agencies, including our state's family engagement policy specialist, Head Start State Collaboration Director, early literacy specialist, student assessment specialist and professional development specialists. The team also expanded membership to partners within health and human service agencies, including Early Intervention, home visiting and early childhood mental health. Under a new Governor and Secretary of Education, our state's Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group is now under the leadership of Undersecretary Ann Reale.

As a Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group, our work to date has resulted in valuable partnerships, an unequivocal commitment to expanding our work and to ensure coordination and alignment with our vision for Birth to Grade 3 systems as outlined in *Building the Foundation of Future Success for Children from Birth through Grade 3*. The Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group serves as the state advisory for the Preschool Expansion Grant. Having the Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group serve as the advisory for PEG ensures that we coordinating with partners to strengthen services and supports in the infant, toddler and early elementary space and opens the opportunity to engage critical partners in the PEG planning.

Provide examples of your efforts for improving transitions for children from 0-5 and K-3

##### **1. Transitions for Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age Five**

Our LEAs and ELPs have worked diligently to engage hard-to-reach families to learn about PEG opportunities. While each community varied in its outreach strategies, there was an intentional and

agreed upon goal of ensuring that education agencies worked to educate families about the benefits of preschool.

In October 2015, EEC hosted a statewide meeting of the five LEAs and their ELPs to discuss outreach to hard-to-reach families. A panel of state experts presented on research and strategies for reaching these families. The panel presentations included discussions on partnering with Early Intervention, social service partners for children with incarcerated parents as well as the Office for Refugees and Immigrants.

***(a) How the state is working to ensure that HQPP will not diminish services or increase costs to families for other programs serving children from birth through age 5***

The PEG team regularly attends local PEG meetings to monitor PEG implementation and to strategize when challenges arise. While no major concerns have arisen to date, the PEG team is cognizant of the possibility of challenges and will work proactively to address them. Concerns about attention to infant/toddler services, workforce development for the early childhood field, as well as ensuring that identification of Bachelor degree teachers for PEG doesn't destabilize the workforce needs of other early childhood classrooms, are of utmost importance.

**2. Transitions for Programs Serving Children from Kindergarten to Grade 3**

***Indicate your progress during the reporting year for activities supporting children from Kindergarten through third grade. Provide specific examples that may include:***

***(a) How the state will ensure that eligible children are well prepared for kindergarten;***

As discussed in Objective 1c, the PEG plan includes the use of TS GOLD as well as other standardized assessments of child outcomes outlined in our evaluation plan. The data from these assessments will inform professional development and family engagement practices, and will also provide EEC with information on where children are developmentally when they enter kindergarten. With representation from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there are opportunities for coordination of transition practices as children move from preschool into kindergarten, including how to share data between prekindergarten and kindergarten educators.

Given the requirement for joint professional development, the PEG program provides early childhood administrators and educators in the five PEG communities with the opportunity to think about the alignment of learning environments, curriculum, instruction, assessment and family engagement opportunities across preschool and kindergarten

***(b) Efforts and activities to sustain the educational and developmental gains of eligible children,*** One of the goals for the state's Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group include the development of a comprehensive policy agenda that increases access to high quality early childhood programs and ensuring that children move through their early learning years with continued high quality experiences that ultimately lead to proficiency across developmental domains.. Many of our PEG communities envision increased access to high quality preschool programs as a critical lever to improving child outcomes in the early years and beyond.

As discussed above in the Overview, we see this work as only being possible when local governance structures exist that allow for public and community-based preschool and kindergarten partners to collaborate together.

***(c) The state's plan to engage parents and families for children moving from HQPP into the early elementary school years;***

Plans for engaging parents and families in transitions between preschool and kindergarten are included as part of the grant's family engagement strategies. Each PEG community either has existing systems for engaging families in moving from preschool into kindergarten or they are collaboratively developing them as part of their PEG plans. For example, Boston has a comprehensive approach to support all children in the city as they enter kindergarten; this

initiative is called Countdown to Kindergarten. Other PEG communities have similar types of transition initiatives underway.

***(d) Steps you have taken to build upon or align:***

***(1) Child learning standards and expectations;***

As a state, we work very closely with our state education partners to ensure that our standards and expectations are attainable and aligned across systems. As mentioned in previous sections, the Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group developed a statement that outlines these aligned expectations and we see our state standards (found in our Curriculum Frameworks) as one way that we ensure children have access to high quality early learning experiences.

***(2) Teacher preparation, credentials, and workforce competencies;***

Massachusetts is participating in a learning table sponsored by the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) and BUILD to focus on teacher preparation, credentials and workforce competencies in the B-3 space. The state team will focus on moving forward a draft Birth to Grade 3 certification framework. The work of this state team will be linked to our state B-3 Advisory Group and PEG will benefit from the work of this group.

***(3) Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment Systems***

As mentioned in section 1(c), Massachusetts is currently using Teaching Strategies GOLD in many of its preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Conversation about our state's Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment System, including how to strengthen and align screening and assessment practices across the Birth to Grade 3 continuum, are underway with our state Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group.

***(4) Data systems; and***

EEC is in the process of strengthening its data infrastructure for subsidized early education services. Discussions about how to incorporate data needs of the PEG program are underway. Children enrolled in PEG have been assigned a State Assigned Student ID (SASID). As the state continues to build its longitudinal data systems, having SASIDs for PEG enrolled children will allow us to understand the impact that PEG has on children as they move into the K-12 system.

***(5) Family engagement strategies***

All of our PEG programs are required to use the Strengthening Families framework to guide its work around family engagement. PEG communities look to Head Start's family engagement framework to guide community and program level practices EEC. As the state rolls out its PEG evaluation, plans for how to better understand family engagement practices and the impact of those practices on child and families will be determined.

## 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*.

Massachusetts has met its target for obtaining non-Federal matching funds via allocation of Chapter 70 dollars.

Chapter 70 education aid is the Commonwealth's primary program for distributing its portion of PreK-12 public education funding to the state's 328 local and regional school districts. The Chapter 70 formula is written to ensure that each school district has the resources to provide an adequate education for all of its students. The formula accomplishes this by taking into account the ability of each district to contribute to the education costs of its students. The formula's broad goal is to ensure that less wealthy districts receive more state aid than wealthier ones, which have more of an ability to contribute.

In state fiscal year 2016, the Commonwealth is spending \$35.8 M in state dollars through Chapter 70 funding to support pre-kindergarten students. Of this, \$9.1M are allocated to the 5 communities where the PEG program is in place. This amount exceeds that 5.3M required of PEG for the state match. EEC is able to claim these funds for our matching requirement for the Preschool Expansion Grant because no other agency, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the agency that administers Chapter 70), count these funds as a matching requirement towards any other programs. This figure is re-calculated each year upon receipt of updated student enrollment figures from districts each fall, however, the figure above, reported earlier this year is still accurate for FY16.

### **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.

In the first year of the Preschool Expansion Grant, Massachusetts continues to build on the existing system framework for birth to grade three alignment efforts. Massachusetts has made intentional efforts to support the initial roll out of the Preschool Expansion Grant, and continues to work extensively with each grantee to plan and implement local Birth through Grade Three efforts, monitoring their progress, and making recommendations for enhancing the work in year two of implementation.

The establishment of cross sector partnerships, at the state level and the local level, is a success to report in year one, as considerable efforts have been made towards this goal. Although we are confident to report our success in accomplishing the foundation of this work at the state and local level, we recognize the need to continuously support this work in year two as a priority. In addition to the Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group, there are other state level partnerships that indicate our progress toward creating a more seamless progression of supports.

- As described in earlier sections of this report our LEAs and ELPs worked diligently throughout the spring, summer and fall to actively reach out to hard-to-reach families to engage them in learning about



PEG opportunities. While each community varied in its outreach strategies and the partners that collaborated in these efforts, there was an intentional and agreed upon goal of ensuring that a wide range of local partners would be included in reaching out to families whose children are not currently enrolled in a preschool program. In October 2015, EEC hosted a statewide meeting of the five LEAs and their ELPs to discuss outreach to hard-to-reach families. A panel of state and local experts, facilitated by EEC's Senior Policy Analyst Family / Community Engagement, presented on research related to outreach to hard to reach families and strategies for reaching them. The panel presentations included, but were not limited to, discussions on partnering with Early Intervention, social service partners for children with incarcerated parents as well as the Office for Refugees and Immigrants. Communities then had an opportunity to discuss strategies for improving their outreach to hard-to-reach families.

- At the state level, we recently began work with our state 619 coordinator, HS State Collaboration Office, Administration for Children and Families staff, PEG staff and staff from EEC's Professional Development unit to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan with PEG communities (including ELPs, Head Start Disability Coordinators and Public School Early Childhood Special Education staff) came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed in communities. This joint professional development will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the work of the early childhood field to successfully include children with disabilities in all settings, including community-based programs. Our first meeting with communities is scheduled for April 29, 2016.
- As we continue to create partnerships with other state and federal agencies, EEC's Head Start State Collaboration Director and PEG Director facilitated a meeting with the Office of Head Start in February 2016 to provide a high level overview of the Preschool Expansion Grant in Massachusetts, discuss progress and identify challenges. We intend to continue to enhance this partnership and collaborate with regional Head Start specialists in year two.

In addition to effective state level efforts toward this goal, there has been considerable efforts at the local level in each grantee community.

- While many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority of them have received their special education services in public school settings. As a result, the infrastructure didn't always exist to be able to serve children in community-based settings. However, as the PEG sites were identified and in many cases designed, communities were in a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings and many proposed collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff support children with disabilities. The partnership between district and ELPs has allowed them to build an infrastructure to properly refer children. LEA and ELP staff meet regularly and as part of these meetings, the communities have been building the process for referring children. These conversations also allow for community partners to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, if the child is identified as eligible.
- Cross-sector partnerships to support Kindergarten transitions
  - o Through PEG, the Commonwealth has an opportunity to strengthen formative assessment practices in the preschool and kindergarten space and to create better alignment in assessment practices and the transition of data between preschool and kindergarten. Towards this efforts, PEG communities are creating plans to share Pre-K data in PEG classrooms with Kindergarten teachers in the local public schools. It is likely that the community level planning taking place now will inform practices in year two and beyond.
  - o All PEG communities are planning events to support families in the Kindergarten registration process. In many cases, PEG communities are offering these events to families at various times and locations to provide increased access to support. Additionally, PEG programs are offering families information about required documentation for the application process and resources about what to expect in Kindergarten classrooms.

Cross-sector partnerships to support high quality professional development and alignment

- o In two PEG communities, Boston and Springfield, where the PEG classroom curriculum aligns with the curriculum of the public schools, the LEA offers intense professional development days for public school Pre-K and PEG educators on curriculum modules, with a focus on effective instructional practices and strategies for implementation of curriculum.
- o Lawrence designed and implemented a professional development opportunity for Pre-K educators in PEG, Kindergarten educators at the public school, as well as community based and public school leadership, with a focus on early literacy and developmentally appropriate expectations throughout the birth to grade three continuum and is working toward designing a standardized process between Pre-K and K to communicate about child-level developmental progress to support the transition into Kindergarten.
- o A public school in western Massachusetts convenes a professional learning community for PEG Pre-K and public school Kindergarten educators to support effective practices for small group instruction, using locally adopted early literacy indicators and classroom data as a guide.

**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.

As stated in prior sections of this report, the only state funding provided to preschool programs comes in the form the grants to programs. All of EEC's state dollars at this time are allocated to quality supports and all funds to increase access to early education are sourced from CCDBG funds. Therefore, PEG funding represents an innovative approach to preschool financing that EEC hopes is replicated and replaced with state dollars by the end of the grant period.

All funds received through the Preschool Expansion Grant have been allocated as required in the support of the creation of new preschool slots. Specifically:

Only 5 percent of funds have been retained by EEC for program administration and 95 percent of funds have been granted to LEAs to support expansion of new slots in licensed ELP programs,

Each LEA has retained no more than 5 percent for program administration, thereby passing 95 percent of local funds on to fund direct service,

ELP programs have been designed specifically to meet the PEG requirement of High quality (as described in detail above.)

All program implementation has taken place in the five high needs communities outlined in EEC's application for PEG funds: Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, Holyoke and Springfield.

As of December 1, 2015, programs were serving 702 of the original target of 755 children. Continued enrollment since that has increased the number of children served. The braiding of funding streams in Boston has also allowed that community to serve more children than originally planned and MA has set a new target of serving 859 children in PEG-funded programs each year.

## 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.

Discrepancies between budget and expenditures in year 1. Explain carry over not expended or obligated through 12/31/15.

The discrepancy between our approved Year 1 budget and its total expenditure is \$211,242.50. Much of the unspent funds in Year 1 can be attributed to start up delays. For example, our Year 1 staff related budget (Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, and associated indirect costs) was based on a January 1, 2015 start. The reality, however, was a staggered hiring process that was not complete until October 2015. Overall, the delay in the PEG grant implementation could account for roughly \$128K of the unspent funds. The remaining \$83K was tied to IT related expenses. We budgeted \$2,400 to purchase two laptop computers. We were actually able to use existing inventory. The most significant piece of the IT budget left unspent was \$75K budget to develop IT infrastructure to incorporate data into longitudinal data system. The longitudinal study project started later than anticipated, therefore, delayed the projected IT need.

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).

EEC is not planning on any major changes to its funding or implementation of PEG in year two. A few changes that will allow for adaptation to lessons learned in year one are planned. These include:

Maintaining the funding for the Inter-agency Service Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to maintain Donna Traynham as a member of the PEG team. These funds will allow Donna to continue to contribute one day per week of her time to supporting PEG activities. Her involvement not only builds the team's capacity to move initiatives across the two state agencies but also serves as an important model to the field of the partnership between early education and elementary education expected of the grant.

Increasing the funds for the Longitudinal Study.

Decreasing funding for information technology.

Adding in funding for graduate-level interns. EEC has benefited greatly from the work of interns from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and seeks to continue their involvement via paid internships.

Increasing funding for joint professional development. As the implementation of PEG is in full swing and the Sr. Professional Development specialist has been hired, support for the professional learning communities at the local and state level will benefit from additional support.

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.

A team of students from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education selected EEC's proposed project on PEG Sustainability as an area of study for their education policy class. This team developed a report and

PowerPoint presentation on the issue and shared it with their professor Paul Reville (Former MA Secretary of Education), classmates, EEC PEG staff and Commissioner Tom Weber. After incorporating input from each group, the final report provides an in depth review of the challenges and opportunities of PEG sustainability and provides specific recommendations for the future. Specifically, the report recommends:

- i. Ensure that PEG is a successful model by demonstrating there is demand for Pre-K at the local level and publicizing the successes of the program through an increased social media presence.
- ii. Build political will through local and state coalitions. There is interest and support for early education across a broad range of sectors and stakeholders, and the EEC should partner with organizations that can unite and mobilize these constituents to put pressure on state-level policy makers.
- iii. Develop a blended funding model that incorporates federal, state, and local sources. The EEC should be clear in communicating that the state should not be required to fully cover the funding gap that will be left when PEG expires.

The MA Legislature approved a new \$500k line item in EEC's budget to support planning grants for communities interested in expanding access to high quality preschool. Based on the PEG model, grants will support 13 communities in the development of strategic plans that examine the needs, opportunities and partnerships needed to create additional preschool options for low income families. In those communities that already receive a PEG grant (four of the five PEG communities applied and were awarded a planning grant) these funds will allow the LEA and its partners to determine elements required to expand the PEG model to serve children ages 3-5. Once completed, these plans will serve as an important guide for each community for the use of any future funds from local, state or philanthropic sources.

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.

In order to devote a maximum amount of funding on the implementation of PEG services, all sub-recipients in MA chose not to charge the first six months of their time to the grant. This time was spent in countless hours of planning meetings as each LEA and partnering ELPS met to decide on the design of PEG programming, leadership, governance, etc. Programs spent the summer and early fall outfitting space, hiring teachers, providing orientation to new staff and recruiting eligible families to enroll their children. Classrooms began opening in September and all were in operation by the end of October. Not all were fully enrolled, however, by the end of the year. Comprehensive services were scheduled to start in December. Due to this roll out of in-kind planning, start up and implementation each LEA had a significant portion of their grant carry over into year two. These carry over dollars will support continued implementation of the first year of programming through August of 2016. (MA PEG grantees provide a 12-month program cycle.)