

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

2015 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Vermont





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 #: S419B150008 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: _____

3. Project Title: 84.419B Preschool Development Grants-Expansion

4. Grantee Name: Vermont Agency of Education, Integrated Support for Learning

5. Grantee Address: 219 North Main St., Suite 402

City: Barre State: Vermont Zip: 05641

6. Project Director Name: Karin Edwards

Title: Director

Phone #: (802) 479-1407 Ext.: 1407 Fax #: (802) 479-1829

Email Address: karin.edwards@vermont.gov

Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2014 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		
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

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

a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No

b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government? Yes No

c. If yes, provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: 07/01/2012 To: 06/30/2015

Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: _____

Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only) Provisional Final Other Specify other: predetermined

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: VT

PR/Award #: S419B150008

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.

Executive Summary

Summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant

Two Goals

The State progressed toward achieving the Preschool Development Grant's (PDG) two goals: 1) Implementing and sustaining High-Quality Preschool Programs (HQPPs) that reach and serve additional 1459 PDG-eligible children in 33 High-Need Communities by Year 4; and 2) Enhancing preschool program infrastructure and capacity to deliver HQPPs.

Goal 1: Implementing and sustaining HQPPs that reach and serve additional 1459 PDG-eligible children in 33 High-Need Communities by Year 4

In its PDG application, the State requested \$7,231,681 in Year 1 federal PDG funds to pay for 498 new PDG slots and improve 795 existing slots to serve PDG-eligible children in the first year of funding. These 1,293 PreK slots represented an expansion of access to a total of 49.90% of Vermont's eligible four-year-olds. Because of the barriers described below, the State used the PDG to fund 359 or 17.6 percent of PDG-eligible children served by HQPPs in Year 1. Although the Year 1 figures fell short, the State expects to catch up to our PDG application's Year 4 figures of 1,818 (70.17%) PDG-eligible children served statewide by HQPPs by Year 4.

Vermont defined "high-needs communities" as Supervisory Unions (SUs) and Supervisory Districts (SDs) (LEAs) that have 25% or more of their children at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). To ensure the PDG project's statewide reach and take advantage of Vermont's mixed preschool delivery system, the State proposed a total of 33 PDG subgrantees (all seven of Vermont's Head Start programs and 26 of Vermont's SUs and SDs) in approximately 150 high needs communities statewide would participate in the PDG. Through a rigorous PDG subgrantee application process involving the Governor's Office, the Agency of Education (AOE), and Agency of Human Services (AHS), PDG subgrantees were required to submit very detailed PDG applications describing how they would meet the PDG requirements and implement and sustain HQPPs as defined under the PDG.

Based upon a rigorous review of these detailed PDG applications, AOE awarded PDG grants to 16 PDG subgrantees consisting of three Head Start programs and 13 SU/SDs in Year 1.

Because of the barriers explained below, the State fell short of its goal to have 33 PDG Subgrantees in Year 1. The State expects that the numbers of PDG subgrantees -- both Head Start programs and SUs/SDs will increase in Year 2.

Goal 2: Enhancing preschool program infrastructure and capacity to deliver HQPPs.

Vermont has made incremental progress spending five percent of total PDG funds for administrative purposes.

The application indicated the PDG funds would be used to hire Program and Fiscal Managers, to fund a contract for external program evaluation and use limited expenses relating to travel and equipment. The application indicated that the two positions would manage the PDG implementation statewide. The PDG Program Manager would provide technical assistance to subgrantees and create, facilitate, and support a Professional Learning Community enabling subgrantees to share best practices, collaborate on training and professional development, and support each other in developing HQPPs. Despite repeated recruitment efforts, a suitable candidate for this position has not been found. In an effort to create a more attractive position, Agency of Education (AOE) staff are currently working to get permission to convert the limited service position to a contract.

As will be described later in this report AOE and AHS staff have worked hard to make whatever support is possible to subgrantees. They have participated in trainings and technical assistance relevant to enhancing infrastructure and capacity.

Vermont also planned to hire a Fiscal Manager to support the grant's objective of creating and training a cohort of PDG subgrantees to become experts over the course of the grant period in properly braiding funding streams for the enhancement of program sustainability. The Fiscal Manager would provide technical assistance to subgrantees to educate them about state and federal requirements of the various funding streams available to subgrantees in order to support the sustainability of their HQPPs. This would include developing business plans for private providers that would assist them in using the grant monies to conduct use available funds during the grant period to maximize the impact of the funds. Another function of the Fiscal Manager would be to train all subgrantees in effective practices for sustaining programming beyond the four-year grant period.. The Fiscal Manager would also train relevant agency staff over the course of the grant period to build up expertise within AOE and Agency of Human Services on funding sources available to support high quality preschool programs, the requirements of those funding sources and how to appropriately braid these funding streams. Since this position is to be supervised by the Grant Manager it also has not been filled.

The mismatch between some PDG requirements with features of Vermont's pre-kindergarten landscape and misunderstanding about the application of federal cost allocation principles created barriers for potential subgrantees. Vermont's statutory requirement to have the Joint Fiscal Office approve acceptance of federal grant funds before they can be spent caused a three month delay in PDG implementation between January 27, 2015 when AOE received Vermont's Grant Award Notification from the U.S. Department of Education and April 20, 2015 when acceptance of the funds was approved. A high number of potential subgrantees in rural areas where economies of scale contributed to a higher cost per child led to a protracted subgrantee recruitment and subgranting negotiation process. Prevalence of mixed-age and mixed socio-economic classrooms resulted in the frequent application of the PDG supplanting requirements. This meant that PDG subgrantees had to raise non-federal PDEG funds in a very compressed timeframe and was a major factor why many potential PDG subgrantees decided to defer until Year 2 to become a PDG subgrantee. In addition, there was some initial confusion about how cost allocation principles generally used by Head Start applied to this grant.

The PDG application indicated that private philanthropic dollars, part of Vermont's 58% match of requested PDG funds, would support mentoring to increase the number of licensed early education teachers in Vermont. This is one of the successes of the grant. A group consisting of staff from AOE, AHS and representatives of higher education and philanthropic organizations began meeting during the summer of 2015. In Vermont educator licensing is required for all PreK programs. To be eligible for an educator license professionals need to have a B.S or MA in the related field. A provisional license is a bridge to full licensure for Vermont educators. who hold a degree and have a two year plan to meet licensing requirements. While there were many individuals who had bachelor's degrees and teaching endorsements in fields other than early childhood, superintendents were reluctant to sign off on and supervise staff working in private programs. The working group developed a proposal that was approved by the Secretary of Education that allows the Secretary to request the provisional license. Supervision and mentoring is being funded and staffed by philanthropic organizations. An cohort of twenty-five obtained provisional licenses and began work in the fall and a second cohort of twenty five is starting soon. Two teachers with provisional license are located in PDG subgrantee classrooms.

Vermont children have benefitted from the first year implementation of the PDG. The quality and dosage of school-based, private and Head Start-operated prekindergarten education programs serving for four-year-olds under 200% FPL was significantly increased. Capacity and infrastructure within Vermont's preschool system has increased. State agency and PDG subgrantees increased their knowledge about the financing of prekindergarten and appropriate braiding of federal PDG funds with other federal and state funding streams to provide high-quality full-day pre-kindergarten education to PDG-eligible children. The salaries of Head Start and private provider teachers in PDG funded classrooms were raised to those of public school teachers in their community. Subgrantees were able to provide transportation using grant funds. This allowed eligible children who might not otherwise been able to attend preschool to attend. Several subgrantees found creative ways to maintain mixed age and income classrooms while appropriately using funds for eligible children. A long time shortage of licensed early educators has been addressed through a creative collaboration among philanthropic organizations, state agencies and higher education institutions.

An unexpected benefit of the grant has been the increased collaboration among the Vermont Agency of Education, Head Start PDG subgrantees, and the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office in the Agency of Human Services. Grant implementation highlighted the need for new facilities which resulted in the publication of the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office-funded September 2015 report titled, "Understanding and Assessing the Facility Needs of Vermont's Early Learning and Development Programs." See http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Reports/VT_EC_Facilities_Need_Report.pdf.

Several valuable lessons have been learned in the first year of PDG implementation. The first year plan proved to be overly ambitious. Only sixteen of the thirty three entities that had signed on to participate in the grant actually ended up as subgrantees despite extensive contact and support. A major reason for this was the complexity of working through allowable funding for the grant activities and sustainability requirements. After the initial 33 programs were provided with a PDEG guidance and FAQ, one challenge that caused Head Start, public schools, and private entities not to participate was the need for creating new classrooms and new facilities and grant funds do not support construction of major renovation. Rutland County Head Start wanted to apply as a Year 1 subgrantee, but it decided against applying in Year 1 after its program director learned from the State PDEG team and the PDEG FAQ that PDEG funds would not pay for major building renovations to build a PDEG classroom. Other factors included the challenge of maintaining mixed age and income classrooms when the grant could only fund the percentage of cost for eligible children, the funding pressures SU/SDs were feeling as Act 46, a new state law that caps education funding took effect and the partial implementation of a universal access to preschool law.

These lessons will shape our actions as we begin recruiting subgrantees for year 2. We are currently revising application for year two. We will have very clear directions and forms to support the budgeting process. We will be able to provide succinct and accurate information about allowable uses of grant funds and give examples of how year 1 subgrantees have used funds to improve quality programs. Most importantly we will have success stories from current subgrantees that will show how some of the limitations the grant imposes have been turned into opportunities in Vermont communities. Some examples include using local dollars or grant funds to complete renovations and to maintain mixed income and age classrooms. Our plan is to disseminate applications directly to the 17 entities that signed on to participate in year one as well as using our weekly field memo distributed to all 59 supervisory unions



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: VT

PR/Award #: S419B150008

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.

On April 20, 2015, the Vermont Legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee approved the State's acceptance of the federal Preschool Development Grant-Expansion (PDG). Subsequently, staff from the Governor's Office with assistance from Agency of Education and Agency of Human Services and staff from private funding organizations called identified contacts at each of the 33 Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts and Head Start Programs that had signed MOUs agreeing to participate as PDG subgrantees when the State submitted its application to the U.S. Department of Education. At that time 11 organizations indicated they would not become subgrantees. Reasons included reluctance to participate in the initial year of the grant, uncertainty about how this work would interact with implementation of a new state preschool law, concerns about sustainability and realization that grant funds could not be used for activities such as constructed new classrooms they had hoped to use grant funds for. Three potential new subgrantees were identified at this time.

The twenty -five potential subgrantees were provided with a sample scope of work (SOW) and budget documents. A Frequently Asked Questions document was developed and disseminated and technical assistance was provided by phone and in person.

From late March through early August, staff from the Governor's Office, the Agency of Education, and the Head Start State Collaboration Office Director in the Agency of Human Services performed extensive outreach and recruitment with 22 potential PDG subgrantees by holding a webinar, conference calls, and in-person meetings with PDG subgrantees in every region of the State.

During this period of technical assistance and budget development an additional nine organizations decided not to participate when they considered issues such as sustainability and implementation of a new state universal access to preschool law. Individual meetings were held with leadership from each interested supervisory union and Head Start Program to work through SOWs and budget requests. As budgets were developed the Finance Director and Federal Fiscal Monitoring Analyst from the Agency of Education reviewed and indicated needed changes to the budget proposals in order to ensure that all requested funds were allowable expenses for this grant and met federal grant requirements in general. The individual meetings were followed up with numerous phone and e-mail exchanges to refine both documents. The budgeting was particularly complicated because of the multiple state and federal funding sources available to support preschool programs and the supplantation requirements of the grant. Prevalence of mixed-age and mixed socio-economic classrooms in our subgrantees resulted in complex budgeting calculations in order to address the PDEG requirements of grant dollars

use only for four year olds at or below 200% poverty. This meant that PDG subgrantees had to raise non-federal PDEG funds in a very compressed timeframe and was a major factor why many potential PDG subgrantees --both Head Start programs and Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts decided to defer until Year 2 to become a PDG subgrantee; Most subgrantees had approvable SOWs and budgets in time to have a subgrant start date by early July. Head Start budgets and SOWs were finalized in early August.

Based upon a rigorous review of these detailed PDG applications, AOE awarded PDG grants to 16 PDG Subgrantees consisting of three Head Start programs and 13 SUs/SDs in Year 1. Please see previous section for our strategies to recruit new supervisory unions for year two.

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.

Pursuant to IDEA Part B/Section 619, early childhood special education, administered by the AOE, is Vermont's system of special education and related services for children age three up to six with identified disabilities. The December 2014 Child Count Data represents the total number and percentage of children who receive early childhood special education and related services. More than 76% of children with disabilities age three, four and five participate in inclusive early childhood programs. Each PDEG program is categorized as an inclusive early childhood program. Act 166, Vermont's universal PreK legislation, requires school districts to provide public PreK access to all three, four and five year olds for 10 hours a week for 35 weeks a year. Each school district must implement universal PreK as of July 1, 2016. Act 166 provides benefits for children with disabilities that include equal opportunity for child and family to benefit from public PreK; broadens continuum of alternative placements available within the district to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services; increases district capacity to educate children with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate alongside children who do not have disabilities and; emphasizes the need to develop and adopt state and local policies that actively promote and encourage high quality inclusion. Vermont's comprehensive child find system includes policies and procedures that are coordinated with all other major efforts by other state agencies responsible for administering the various health, social service programs and education to ensure that each and every child who may be eligible for services under Part B and Part C of IDEA are identified, located, screened, referred and evaluated. Recent opportunities in Vermont (e.g., Early Learning Challenge Grant - Race to the Top, Vermont Early Learning Standards, Act 166, PreK Development Grant) and beyond (Division for Early Childhood (DEC)-National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, U.S. Department of Education (DOE)/U.S. Department of Health and Human (DHH) Services policy statement on inclusion of young children with disabilities in high-quality inclusive early childhood programs, and U.S. DOE/DHH Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings) have heightened our awareness of the importance of supporting the full participation of each and every young child. As Vermont moves toward making high quality inclusion a reality in diverse early childhood settings, a cross-sector Steering Committee of knowledgeable, thoughtful individuals drawn from across state/local agencies and systems that support Vermont's young children and their families was established to create a set of state guiding principles on inclusion that will convey shared values about inclusion, diversity, and family engagement. During 2015, Vermont planned and designed a Dual Language

Learners (DLL) training series geared for early childhood cross sector practitioners, leaders, administrators, and families. This series will be offered in the spring of 2016 and will focus on Bridging Cultural Perspectives in Early Care & Education (ECE); Understanding our Children and Families and Dual Language Learning; Exploring Research-Based Models for Inclusion of DLLs Across Early Learning and Development Settings Birth-Grade 2; Using Evidence-Based Practices that Support the Development and Learning of Languages for Culturally, Linguistically and Ability Diverse Learners and Their Families in the Context of the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).

Statewide

PreK enrollment figures for 2013-14 5,854

PreK enrollment figures for 2014-15 7,316 (which is an increase of 25%)

Number of children (ages 3, 4 and 5) for 2014-15 identified and receiving special education and related services under Part B of IDEA

Count 1325 **Percentage** 18.11%

PDEG Sites (16)

Number of four year old children participating in PDEG programs (2015)

Count 359 **Percentage** 100%

Number of four year old children identified and receiving special education and related services under Part B of IDEA

Count 40 **Percentage** 17.02%

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

During Year 1, the Governor's Office formed and convened meetings of the State's Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Leadership Team was a critical factor that contributed to the State's success in created new, and/or improved existing State Preschool Program slots and ensured the coordination of Vermont's preschool program services with other State and Federal resources. The PDG Leadership Team also performed in-person technical assistance outreach and education throughout the State to 35 potential PDG subgrantees consisted of Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts and federal Head Start grantees about the PDG subgrantee application process and timeline and organized and held conference calls with U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Human Services staff and/or potential PDG subgrantees about significant PDG issues, such as mixed age classrooms and federal cost allocation compliance issues. The PDG Leadership Team consisted of representatives from the Agency of Education (AOE) and Agency of Human Services (AHS) because AOE shares authority with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in AHS to oversee the implementation of state-funded prekindergarten education under Acts 62 and 166, the administration of the Kindergarten Readiness Survey, and the implementation of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). AOE administers IDEA Part B, Section 619 Early Childhood Special Education Services, federal Title I funds, and the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program. The Children Development Division (CDD) in DCF, AHS administers the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CC FAP) which helps eligible families with the cost of child care and oversees related workforce and quality improvement initiatives using state General Funds and federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars. CDD has responsibility for licensing early childhood programs including those providing child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten education; the Head Start State Collaboration Office; and Children's Integrated Services (CIS) that includes early intervention services under Part C of IDEA. CDD within DCF works closely with and grants \$184,000 annually in Vermont General Funds to the Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council. As the PDG fiscal agent, AOE awarded PDG subgrants to 13 Supervisory Unions/School Districts and three Head Start grantees. The PDG Leadership Team and the AOE Financial Office rigorously ensured that PDG subgrantees appropriately cost allocated, pro-rated, and layered state and federal funding streams, including state-funded prekindergarten education under Acts 62 and Act 166, federal Head Start dollars, and in the case of Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts federal Title I funds. Subgrantees could use CCFAP dollars to provide before and after child care to PDG-eligible children outside of the school day prekindergarten education hours that the PDG can fund. Compliance with program standards: Under Vermont's Act 166 of 2014 (An act relating to providing access to publicly funded prekindergarten education) each prekindergarten child (3, 4 or 5 years old and not in Kindergarten) whose parent or guardian is entitled to no less than ten hours per week for 35 weeks annually of publicly funded prekindergarten education at an available prequalified prekindergarten education program operated by a public school or private program. A public school or private prekindergarten education program shall be considered prequalified only if it meets all of the quality standards outlined in Act 166 and state rule. These include: program recognition standards (NAEYC Accreditation OR 4 or 5 STARS in VT's QRIS OR 3 STARS with an approved plan to achieve 4 STARS in two years) and educator standards (a teacher with an educator license endorsed in early childhood education or early childhood special education). As of December 31, 2015 we have 318 prequalified programs (128 public schools and 190 community-based programs). All PDG funded PreK programs are prequalified.

The estimated number of Vermont 4 year olds at or below 200% poverty is 2,733 (37% of four year olds). We estimate that there are 820 eligible children across our subgrantees. 359 are participating in preschool in subgrantee classrooms (44%). The number of targeted children in the 16 subgrantees was 463 which is 104 more than the actual children participating (359).

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.

This is a transition year for Vermont in terms of legislation, policy and practices regarding preschool education. Since 2007, Act 62 has set quality standards for preschool programs and allowed school districts to use public funds to pay for this. Participation in Act 62 by the school districts is voluntary. Act 166 was passed by the Vermont legislature in 2014. This legislation provides universal access to 10 hours of publicly funded preschool to all 3,4 and 5 year olds not yet in kindergarten children. Act 166 built on and expanded years of efforts by the Vermont legislature, state agencies, private philanthropic organizations and Vermont communities to provide high quality, accessible preschool education to Vermont children, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Initially Act 166 was to be fully implemented for the 2015-2016 school year. In November 2014 the Secretaries of Education and Human Services issued a joint Transition Relief Memo allowing voluntary implementation this year with full implementation required for the 2015-2016 school year. This was done in order to allow time for the Act 166 rules to be adopted and time for local school boards to adapt budgets to the changes

implementation would require. Approximately one third of Vermont Supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts offered universal access to preschool education for the 2015-2016 school year. Enrollment data for fall 2015 indicate that 7,316 three, four, and five year old children (61%) were served by the state PreK program. This is an increase of 1,462 children or 25% over the previous year.

The 2015-2016 school year is the final year of the Early Education Initiative. Since 1987 competitive grants were available to provide early learning opportunities for 3 and 4 year old children considered at risk. Since Act 166 provides funding for universal access to preschool education these funds will no longer be necessary.

State Board of Education rules implementing Act 166 become effective on July 1, 2016. At this time all school districts are required to fully implement the law. In order to support implementation of Act 166 an interagency team has been meeting weekly since the summer of 2014. In addition to overseeing the rule making process this team has provided a series of webinars, guidance documents and Frequently Asked Questions intended to provide information to specific audiences as well as the general public. A new series of training and guidance is planned for the upcoming spring and summer to support full implementation of the law.

Act 166 requires that any preschool program receiving public tuition dollars meet a set of quality requirements in order to become prequalified. Any program that receives state funds is required to be prequalified. As of January 31, 2016 there were 311 prequalified public and private programs. The quality criteria for prequalification include receiving and maintaining one of the following: accreditation through the National Association for Young Children; a minimum of four stars in Vermont's quality rating system, or three stars with an approved plan to achieve at least four stars within two years; licensed by the Department of Children and Families and good regulatory status; curriculum aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards and teachers who hold valid Vermont hold educator's licenses with endorsement in either early childhood education or early childhood special education. In the case of registered or licensed child care homes operated by an individual who is not a licensed teacher either a licensed teacher must be under contract to provide the publicly funded preschool education or the home care provider must receive active, hands on training and supervision at least three hours each week during the time that the publicly funded preschool education is taking place.

Building Bright Futures is a statewide nonprofit, public-private partnership focused on improving the well-being of young children and their families. The organization's structure includes an executive director and several other staff including a regions coordinator, as well as, 12 regional coordinators who work with local communities in their regions. One success in the past year has been the full staffing of the regional coordinator positions and their increasing ability to provide outreach in their regions in order to inform families about the opportunities that exist for their children to attend high quality preschool programs. Building Bright Futures is also in charge of implementation of Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan. Another success in the last year has been the update and review of progress for action plan strategies at the Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council meetings. This gives a broad group of state level stakeholders the opportunity to see the progress that is being made on the action plan and make recommendations about how to move the work forward. Building Bright Futures also has a role in the implementation of Act 166. They are charged with working with the Agencies of Education and Human services to develop a regional plan to increase capacity when the demand for for publicly funded preschool exceeds to availability.

Several efforts to improve quality of existing preschool programs are described elsewhere in the report. These include an evaluation of STARS, the state tiered quality rating and improvement system; adoption by the State Board of Education of the revised Vermont Early Learning Standards; development of an Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment Plan; training a cadre of trainers for the assessments included in the plan; trainings in administration of these assessments for preschool providers; development of guiding principles for inclusion of children with disabilities in preschool education programs and a collaboration of Agency of Education staff, Agency of Human Services staff and private funders to increase the number of preschool teachers who hold valid teaching licences.

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

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

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

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

Also, please describe, if applicable:

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

Since 2000, Vermont has gathered information on the readiness of children entering kindergarten by surveying kindergarten teachers about the "readiness" of their students within the first six to ten weeks of school. This effort to measure school readiness is a collaborative project of the Vermont Agency of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Health. There are many interpretations of what constitutes "readiness". Vermont's concept of children's readiness is multidimensional; it includes social and emotional development, communication, physical health, as well as cognitive development, knowledge, and approaches to learning (e.g., enthusiasm for learning, persistence, curiosity).

Since the fall of 2013, The American Institutes for Research (AIR) has completed two studies for the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Kindergarten Entry Assessment Workgroup of the Data and Evaluation Committee of the Building Bright Futures (BBF) State Advisory Council. The studies have assessed the validity of and suggested revisions to, the original Vermont Kindergarten Readiness Survey. Those results were acted upon in March of 2014, changes made accordingly, and the revised Survey administered in the fall of 2014.

Vermont's Kindergarten Readiness Survey (KRS) is collected statewide on annual basis. The 24-item survey is completed by kindergarten teachers for each kindergarten student in their class during the first six to ten

weeks of school. Responses are based on the teacher's observation of the child. The domains included in the KRS are:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Communication
- Cognitive Development - General Knowledge
- Physical Health and Development*

During 2015, a collaborative decision was made by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Implementation Team to extend the contract with AIR in order to identify additional health and wellness indicators* to be incorporated in the KRS. We wanted to make sure that the KRS aligned with the new *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five* as well as the Bright Futures recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. AIR was able to do this work within a tight timeframe. They utilized KEAs from other states and found measures that had proven reliable in their own contexts and gave the work group a comprehensive table that included a list of questions, where they had been used, and what level of reliability each one had. From this work, the task force was able to choose additional questions to be included in the newly revised KRS.

On October 15th, 2015 the newly revised KRS was disseminated to approximately 405 kindergarten teachers statewide. Teachers were instructed to complete the survey for each child in their kindergarten classroom by November 13th, 2015. Preliminary data collection results indicate that teachers across the state completed surveys for 95% of enrolled kindergarten students. This is a major increase from 81% in 2014. At this time, the AOE is in the process of analyzing the data. Report scheduled to be released April 2016. Results of the newly revised 2015 KRS will be used as a baseline measurement for subsequent annual surveys. We need to continue to ensure that kindergarten teachers know how to accurately use the KRS, that they know it's purpose, how to interpret and use the data, and that they understand formative assessment in general. In addition, we will continue to work closely with our private partners to ensure that KRS data is presented accurately to the wider public. In 2015, In addition, it is worth noting that the Agency of Education developed and offered professional learning opportunities for all kindergarten teachers. Five regional KRS trainings were planned for and conducted across the state. 95 kindergarten teachers attended the face to face trainings. The KRS modules that were developed will be posted on-line in conjunction with KRS report (spring 2016). It is an assumption that the increase KRS response rate may have been influenced by the regional trainings.

KRS Training Modules:

1. History and Purpose
2. Recommended Assessment Practices
3. Approaches to learning
4. Essential Domains of School Readiness:
 - a. Physical Development and Health
 - b. Social and Emotional
 - c. Communication
 - d. Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
5. Overview of KRS for Leaders and Administrators

In October of 2015, AIR completed a KRS alignment with the newly revised Vermont Early Learning Standards. The purpose of the alignment was to examine how well the early learning constructs measured by the KRS are the content and constructs that the state intends to measure as evidence of kindergarten readiness. The VELs

were designed to span across infants to grade 3. AIR aligned the VELs goals to the KRS items and examined the examples for 'older preschoolers' to ensure accurate alignment with the intention of the standards is for children to acquire skills by the end of the preschool year and enter kindergarten with these skills. AIR reported that the revised KRS and VELs had strong alignment of 91% of items and 81% of standards. Changes to the KRS and VELs since 2013 led to greater alignment of constructs across both documents. The alignment of the 2015 KRS and revised VELs was strong (91% of items and 81% of standards) and much improved compared with 2013 KRS alignment with the prior VELs in which only 50% of the standards aligned to KRS.

The reliable and validated kindergarten readiness survey will continue to assess progress of incoming kindergarten students over the course of the grant and beyond.

Results of the newly revised 2015 KRS will be used as a baseline measurement for subsequent annual surveys.

Results of the 2015 KRS survey will be reported spring 2016.

We are in the process of defining the extent to which we will disaggregate KRS results.

For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:

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

n/a

Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

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

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

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

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

Current funding sources utilized in the development of infrastructure to support high quality improvement and monitoring include: Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, IDEA section 619 state level, State Personnel Development Grant, Agency of Human Services Child Development Division CC FAP, Early Education Initiative Grant, and Act 166 Publically funded PreK

(a) Vermont Early Learning Standards (birth through grade 3) were approved by the State Board of Education in August 2015. VELs is posted on the Agency of Education website at <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-early-education-vels.pdf>. Each PDG program received a copy of the VELs in December 2015. Beginning 2016, the VELs professional development committee will post VELs informational webinars; offer a week long VELs Institute (June 20-24th); create a state cadre of VELs trainers and coaches that will provide regional trainings and support for all PDG programs in an effort to inform and align VELs with curriculum and embed evidence-based practices.

(b) VT AHS Child development division is in process of updating the child care licensing regulations for all VT regulated early childhood programs. The proposed changes include higher baseline standards for health and safety, program curriculum, family support and teacher qualifications and development. All prequalified pre-k programs must meet program licensing standards as well as the prequalification standards outlined in Act 166. (See section 1(a)-box 3 of this report)

(c) VT AOE provides on-going training and technical assistance to school districts, PDG programs and their PreK partners for children with disabilities. Based on a 2015 statewide survey, Early Childhood Outcomes Process Survey, the AOE with assistance from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) is in the process of developing an professional learning action plan to increase practitioner knowledge and use of evidence based practices to support children with disabilities access, participation with necessary supports in inclusive early childhood programs. In 2016, the AOE will offer training for Dual Language Learners.

(d) VT AHS hosts the Bright Futures Child Care Information System which includes an online search engine of all regulated early childhood programs in VT. Families and professionals can use this system to search for all types of programs, including for the availability of prequalified (high quality) preschool programs.

(e) In late summer of 2015 revisions to the AOE requirements for Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education licensure requirements were adopted. The ECE endorsement was modeled on the NAEYC's 2010 standards for initial early childhood professional preparation and the ECSE endorsement is based on the Division for Early Childhood Council for Exceptional Children's initial preparation standards. The AOE, in collaboration with our community partners at Vermont Birth to Five, have developed a process for Early Childhood teachers in community-based programs otherwise meeting the Act 166 prequalification criteria to apply to be awarded Early Childhood Provisional licensure (valid for 2 years) and provided mentoring support to attain a VT Level 1 teaching license with ECE or ECSE endorsement. One cohort of 25 teachers was filled fall of 2015. A second cohort of 25-27 teachers will be filled for fall 2016.

(f) During 2015, improvements were made to teacher and administrator early education training and professional learning. They include: Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports, Teaching Strategies GOLD, Classroom Assessment Scoring

System (CLASS) Ages and Stages (ASQ-3), Ages and Stages-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE), Environmental Rating Scale (ERS), Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (TEACH) and Vermont Early Learning Standards

(g) The data governance structure incorporates a hierarchical set of committees and workgroups, including an executive leadership team, the Data Governance Council, and designated data stewards workgroups as deemed necessary. The Data Governance Council is composed of data “owners” from the Agency of Education, the Health Department, the Department of Mental Health, the Child Development Division, the Agency of Human Services as well as a representative of the Governor’s Office, the Early Learning Challenge grant and Building Bright Futures. The data governance structure also included external advisory committees that focus on policy, data and evaluation, and the SLDS system. AOE made progress during 2015 in the following areas to prepare the way for the addition of the early childhood data sets: prepared the way for the addition of the early childhood data sets: prepared a “requirements assessment document;” identified the data elements used to match data sets; determined the process used to match data sets; and identified solutions in order to facilitate secure file transfers between systems.

(h) During 2015, Vermont’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System Framework was drafted by stakeholder group represented by individuals across state agency including higher education, region and local level. The living document will be posted for public comment in 2016. [The Framework for Vermont’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System is currently posted for comment. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework of currently utilized early childhood assessments and current initiatives that support child assessment and screening, as well as an initial plan for implementation of a statewide comprehensive assessment system for Vermont.](#)

(i) PDG subgrantees in one-third of school districts providing 10 hours per week for 35 weeks of universal prekindergarten education under Act 166 and PDG-funded preschool to the same children during the 2015-2016 school year applied Act 166’s effective parental participation provisions in PDG classrooms. Beginning on July 1, 2016, all school districts must implement Act 166. Effective parental participation in a prekindergarten education program is the opportunity for parents and guardians to be actively involved in the program, and may include involvement in program development, policy work, program evaluation, curriculum development, and helping in the class. PDG subgrantees implemented the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s five research-informed protective factors: parental resiliency, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children that help strengthen families and protect children from toxic stress. PDG subgrantees participate in Vermont’s Step Quality Recognition System, and PDG subgrantees with programs participating in STARS can earn points in its Families and Communities Arena programs by using the Strengthening Families Child Care Assessment Tool to evaluate and guide improvements in supporting and engaging families. PDG Head Start subgrantees provided regular informal and formal opportunities for responsive family engagement. These opportunities include parental participation on the Head Start Policy Council and in preschool, school-wide, and community activities and by applying the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework to support the systemic integration of effective parent, family and community engagement practices within programs. These efforts support the ultimate goals of enhancing children’s school readiness; sustaining gains in early childhood through later years of children’s education; enhancing the overall quality of programs for children and families; and supporting communities around a shared responsibility to nurture and educate young children. In addition, the three PDG Head Start subgrantees are Strengthening Families Child Care grantees.

(j) The State began building State- and community-level support for High-Quality Preschool Programs (HQPPs) through systemic linkages to other early learning programs and resources to support families, such as child health, mental health, family support, nutrition, child welfare, and adult education and training sectors in several ways: 1) Created the State’s PDG Leadership Team consisting of AOE and AHS officials (see response to Section A, 1(a).) that oversee a range of other early learning programs, including CC FAP, Children’s Integrated Services, Parts B and C of IDEA, Strengthening Families Child Care Grants, and Child and Adult Care Food Program and that made sure that these programs were systemically linked to HQPPs; 2) Promoted PDG subgrantees’ participation in existing and new Head Start-Local Educational Agency Pre-Kindergarten partnerships to build State- and community-level support for HQPPs and link them systemically to other early learning programs and resources to support families by providing a comprehensive range of services; 3) Learning from PDG Head Start subgrantees about how Head Start programs require the provision of comprehensive services and linkages to other early learning programs and resources to support families, such as child health, mental health, family support, nutrition, child welfare, and adult education and training sectors; 4) Encouraging PDG subgrantees to apply the Strengthening Families Framework to foster protective factors and improve child welfare; 5) Establishing a Professional Learning Community to foster systemic linkages to other early learning programs and resources; and 6) Educating Vermont’s Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council members and Building Bright Futures Regional Councils about the need to foster State-, regional, and community-level support for HQPPs through systemic linkages to other early learning programs and resources to support families.

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.

Vermont's progress in this area has been hampered by our lack of success in hiring the positions that were included in the grant to directly support the subgrantees. The AOE posted this limited service position on 4 separate occasions in 2015. At this time we are in the process of seeking clearance at the Agency of Education to begin the process of hiring a contractor to take on the work. Despite the difficulty finding staff for the grant there has been substantial progress in supporting the subgrantees in establishing high quality programs.

The below information gathered from the preschool programs in each high need community, shows Vermont's progress on expanding high-quality based on program level data collected from our 16 PDEG sites. There was a 100% respondent rate for 2015. **All PDEG program lead teachers are licensed through the Vermont Agency of Education and most are contracted through their school district. Therefore, high staff qualifications are present and the majority of pay for PDEG program licensed teachers on par with the salaries of local K-12 teachers.**

All 16 PDEG programs have a class size of no more than 20. The child to instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1 is insured by compliance to the Vermont Childcare Licensing regulations. **100% of respondents indicated that they are compliant with childcare licensing health and safety standards. All are operating on a full day schedule,** which is defined by not fewer than 5 or more hours per day.

In Vermont educator licensing is required for all PreK programs. Under Act 166, teachers in each prekindergarten classroom in a district-operated prekindergarten education programs shall hold a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either early childhood education or early childhood special education. Private prequalified prekindergarten education programs under Act 166 operated in a licensed Center Based Program shall employ, or contract for the services of, at least one teacher who holds a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either early childhood education or early childhood special education. Ten hours that the licensed teacher is present shall coincide with the hours of prekindergarten education paid for by tuition from districts. A provisional license is a bridge to full licensure for Vermont educators who hold a degree and have a two year plan to meet licensing requirements.

PDEG program staff participated in **high-quality professional learning during 2015.** This included, but is not limited to Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSGOLD), Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Early Multi-tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS), Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3), Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE), Vermont Early Learning Standards, Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, EDUSNAP, and Preschool Development Expansion Grant webinars. Subgrantees also indicated regular participation in program centered professional learning. This included over 56 training opportunities, collectively.

Under the RTT/ELC grant, the Agency of Education and Agency of Human Services are contracting with an entity to fulfill the development and implementation of a comprehensive PreK monitoring system. For 2015, **PDEG site programs reported accountability and evaluation** through measures such as Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), professional development, observations, mentoring, self-assessment, school district visits, NAEYC self-study, walk throughs, parent program evaluation, and supervision meetings. The state is working toward completing the Pre-K monitoring system design and implementation by spring 2017.

Aligning 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, is a high priority. Currently, English Language Learning is embedded in the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS). There are two opportunities planned for dual language learning training under the RTT/ELC grant in 2016. This training will extend follow-up support and networking through 2016 and beyond. A stakeholder group on guiding principles for inclusion is being established and progress is being made in 2016 in putting it into place. Vermont is aligning with DEC and NAEYC recommended practices as well as the USDOE policy on inclusion to inform the work.

Through the 2015 surveys, subgrantees shared varying ways programs **ensure necessary accommodations and supports to provide access to and full participation in all opportunities for children with disabilities.** For example, one site shared, "All children have an individualized plan goals, developed in partnership with the parents; lesson plans are individualized on a rotating basis to include watch child as a 'focus child' enduring that the identified interests and needs are incorporated in to the curriculum. Children on an IEP are included in all activities in the classroom, supported by the

teachers and sometimes individual assistants." Answers on surveys will contribute to inform future professional learning.

Finally, subgrantees communicated on on-site or **accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote family access** to services that support their children's learning and development. For example, some programs report having Family Engagement Coordinators and in house social workers who reach out and support families in accessing resources, services, and supports. Other sites highlight home visiting, family engagement activities, and referrals for medical, dental, social services, and mental health services as important parts of their support to families. For some of these programs, family engagement activities have been enhanced directly due to PDEG funding.

Despite the difficulty finding staff for the grant there has been substantial progress in supporting the subgrantees in establishing high quality programs. Two PDEG programs shared the following comments.

Comments from one PDEG program:

"Our decision to move forward with a PKEG has been focused on improvement of a preschool program that existed in our town where 70% of the children are eligible for subsidy. The needs of this program are great and the partnership has greatly improved the preschool. I observed the classroom just yesterday and the difference seen before and after the grant implementation are already dramatic. The consistent transitions, daily scheduling, curricular planning, materials, set up of the classroom, accommodations and supports, and teaching strategies are all improved. We have been able to increase the quality of teaching and learning. Behavior challenges have reduced, parent engagement has increased, and student outcomes through TSG have improved."

Comments from another PDEG program:

"The increased funding from the PDEG grant has opened a doorway for our program to gain access to enriching experiences, increased wages for qualified teachers, more opportunities for family engagement, and additional educational supplies for our classrooms. It is through these opportunities that our program will provide high quality educational services to our students which will give each child a Head Start to learning. The funding from the PDEG grant has greatly enriched the lives of our students, teachers, and families. The enrichment programs give our students a way to learn math, science, reading, and social skills in a fun way that takes into consideration the many needs and learning styles of each individual. These programs help students think in a more creative way while building confidence and self-esteem that will create a lifelong learner. The PDEG funding has allowed our Head Start program to extend the Pre-K hours into the afternoon opening a pathway for additional learning experiences for our students. Every afternoon our Pre-K teachers host a math meeting with supplies and materials purchased through the PDEG grant. The math lessons are pre-planned for the teachers using a spiral curriculum where the learning is spread out over time and the content is revisited many times over the course of many months' resulting in students having deeper understanding and mastery of the content. Having the ability to designate a time and resources to math will inherently increase our student's outcomes in math while giving them additional experience in reasoning and problem solving. According to the NAEYC early math experiences builds student confidence in their own math ability for years to come. In addition, funding has allowed our program to provide more health and nutrition activities such as our daily student walking club and parent/student cooking club... Our program was able to increase the salary of our licensed teachers to a rate that was competitive to public school teachers. Increased wages will help retain and attract licensed highly qualified teachers for the children we serve. In addition, classrooms and teaching staff will receive Apple iPads. The Apple iPads will be used by the students in the classroom as supplemental tool to obtaining individual student goals and for teachers to have access to a portable device for on the go data entry for student observations. Students and teachers have also benefited from additional science and literacy supplies for their classrooms, such as STEM learning kits and literacy extension boxes."

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

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

As of December 1, 2015 three hundred and fifty nine (359) eligible children were served by subgrantees. This represents 17.6 percent of eligible 4 year old children in the state. At the time the application was submitted the 33 potential subgrantees who has signed agreements to participate projected that they would serve 1,293 eligible children. Of the 33 potential subgrantees just 16 are currently participating so the number of children served for year one is substantially lower than what was projected. We will have information about number of additional subgrantees and new projections for numbers of eligible children served this spring and will work with the project officer to revise the targets.

The average cost per slot is \$18,304.81. The cost per slot varies from \$10,787 to \$29,624. The chart below details the costs for each subgrantee and shows the amount of funds coming from the grant and from other sources. Other sources include funds from the state preschool program, Head Start, state and federal child nutrition programs, Title I and any additional local dollars that are being used.

Please see Appendix A to refer to chart.

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.

Throughout the time that AOE and Governor's Office staff worked with individual subgrantees to develop budgets and SOWs there was extensive, individualized technical assistance and support regarding roles and responsibilities of the state and subgrantees, the requirements of the grant and the Vermont plan for meeting those requirements. This support has diminished since August because two key individuals who did this work have left state government and we have not yet found individuals to fill the grant funded positions that were intended to provide on-going support to subgrantees.

Identifying the need to provide technical assistance and support to all PDEG programs, the early education team at the AOE created a PDEG Community of Practice (CoP) webpage that provides subgrantees a common on-line platform to post questions, receive responses and to network with other individuals from PDEG programs form across the state. The CoP has been successful conduit in disseminating grant related information, professional learning opportunities and resources such as notifications of PDEG webinars and frequently asked questions. The value of the PDEG CoP absolutely lends itself to continuation over the life of the grant and beyond.

(5) All programs are required to complete TSGold entry and post data. This is shared and reported on the state level to the legislature. The curriculum is aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards. The following are example of how PDEG sites have promoted family engagement. "Our Richmond Elementary School (RES) teacher has developed a blog to keep families informed of what is happening in the classroom." "We hold an annual community and parent night specific to PreK in which we update the community and parents on what is happening with PreK in our district. One night is held in the north of our district and one in the south. It is n open forum for questions, comments, and suggestions from parents and community members. Our Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent attend to be part of the discussion. During this night, we also include helpful information about their child's development (e.g., why developing routine are important for your child's development."

PDEG program staff participated in high-quality professional learning during 2015. This included, but is not limited to Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSGOLD), Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Early Multi-tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS), Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3), Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE), Vermont Early Learning Standards, Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, EDUSNAP, and Preschool Development Expansion Grant webinars. Subgrantees also indicated regular participation in program centered professional learning. This included over 56 training opportunities, collectively.

In late summer of 2015 revisions to the AOE requirements for Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education licensure requirements were adopted. The ECE endorsement was modeled on the NAEYC's 2010 standards for initial early childhood professional preparation and the ECSE endorsement is based on the Division for Early Childhood Council for Exceptional Children's initial preparation standards. The AOE, in collaboration with our community partners at Vermont Birth to Five, have developed a process for Early Childhood teachers in community-based programs otherwise meeting the Act 166 prequalification criteria to apply to be awarded Early Childhood Provisional licensure (valid for 2 years) and provided mentoring support to attain a VT Level 1 teaching license with ECE or ECSE endorsement. One cohort of 23 teachers was filled fall of 2015. A second cohort of 25-27 teachers will be filled for fall 2016.

(6) PDEG funds have enhanced the delivery of services rather than supplant state and federal funding under Head Start, Title 1, Child Care Financial Assistance Program, Act 166, Early Education Initiative (EEI), Part B Section 619 under IDEA or any other PreK funding streams. As part of their grant application, PDEG programs were required to submit applications to be approved as a 'prequalified' PreK program under Act 166. PDEG funds are used to create and expand slots to provide full-day high quality preschool offerings in high need communities across the state. See section A: Part B (2) for further description of coordination efforts.

(7, 8, 9)

Recent opportunities in Vermont (e.g., Early Learning Challenge Grant - Race to the Top, Vermont Early Learning Standards, Act 166, PreK Development Grant) and beyond (Division for Early Childhood (DEC)-National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, U.S. Department of Education (DOE)/U.S.

Department of Health and Human (DHH) Services policy statement on inclusion of young children with disabilities in high-quality inclusive early childhood programs, and U.S. DOE/DHH Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings) have heightened our awareness of the importance of supporting the full participation of each and every young child. As Vermont moves toward making high quality inclusion a reality in diverse early childhood settings, a cross-sector Steering Committee of knowledgeable, thoughtful individuals drawn from across state/local agencies and systems that support Vermont's young children and their families was established to create a set of state guiding principles on inclusion that will convey shared values about inclusion, diversity, and family engagement. During 2015, Vermont planned, designed a Dual Language Learners (DLL) training series geared for early childhood cross sector practitioners, leaders, administrators, and families. This series will be offered in the spring of 2016 and will focus on Bridging Cultural Perspectives in Early Care & Education (ECE); Understanding our Children and Families and Dual Language Learning; Exploring Research-Based Models for Inclusion of DLLs Across Early Learning and Development Settings Birth-Grade 2; Using Evidence-Based Practices that Support the Development and Learning of Languages for Culturally, Linguistically and Ability Diverse Learners and Their Families in the Context of the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).

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

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

The PreK to 3rd grade project to sustain the effectiveness of early childhood programs into early elementary years is off to a strong start with FirstSchool, an initiative of the Frank Porter Graham Center of UNC, Chapel Hill. Four preK-primary school communities chose to participate with FirstSchool: St. Albans, St. Johnsbury, Chelsea-Tunbridge, and Smilie School in Bolton. These five rural schools cross Vermont from east to west, and include partnerships with private child care programs and parent child centers. All of these schools are early adopters of universal PreK through Act 166. One school, St. Albans, is also an Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS) site. In the summer of 2015, First School hosted a summer institute to begin the work of creating a “culture of caring, competence and excellence” in the schools, including an in-depth exploration by leadership teams on building a culture of collaborative inquiry across PreK through third grade. In the fall and winter of 2015, the Agency of Education collected EduSnap and CLASS baseline data for the approximately 85 teachers. This data will be used to drive decision-making about teaching practices at the classroom, grade, and school levels and approximately 1600 children will be impacted in these five schools. We look forward to tracking progress of these children and teachers as this pilot moves forward.

The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) birth through third grade were published in the Fall of 2015. The VELS is aligned with the Common Core Standards for K-12 in the areas of literacy and mathematics as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five . Professional development will be provided to the field and intentional outreach about this professional development opportunity will be provided to our PDEG sites.

In Vermont we have adopted the TS GOLD assessment system for all state PreK programs. The TS GOLD in the process of being cross-walked with the VELS.

Vermont's seamless progression of providing supports and interventions from birth through third grade is taking a statewide interagency (AOE and AHS) approach to build comprehensive early childhood system in order to realize the promise of every child. Therefore, every eligible child within our subgrantee programs will directly benefit. Progress over 2015 included publication of the VELS (birth through grade three), coordinated efforts to improve transitions from early intervention to PreK and from PreK to K, universal screening, joint agency professional learning opportunities, Early MTSS K-12 system and content alignment, and the pilot project (First School) which is explained below.



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*.

Vermont is contributing matching funds over four years of this grant. The match includes VT General Fund Dollars, VT Education Fund Dollars and private philanthropic support. These matching funds will support the state level infrastructure related to the PDG Expansion including monitoring and technical assistance for subgrantees, mentoring the license teachers and PreK direct services.

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.

Vermont's seamless progression of providing supports and interventions from birth through third grade is taking a statewide interagency (AOE and AHS) approach to build comprehensive early childhood system in order to realize the promise of every child. Therefore, every eligible child within our subgrantee programs will directly benefit. Progress over 2015 included publication of the VELS (birth through grade three), coordinated efforts to improve transitions from early intervention to PreK and from PreK to K, universal screening, joint agency professional learning opportunities, Early MTSS K-12 system and content alignment, and the pilot project (First School) which is explained below.

Our project to sustain the effectiveness of early childhood programs into early elementary years is off to a strong start with FirstSchool, an initiative of the Frank Porter Graham Center of UNC, Chapel Hill. Four preK-primary school communities chose to participate with FirstSchool: St. Albans, St. Johnsbury, Chelsea-Tunbridge, and Smilie School in Bolton. These five rural schools cross Vermont from east to west, and include partnerships with private child care programs and parent child centers. All of these schools are early adopters of universal PreK through Act 166. One school, St. Albans, is also an Early MTSS site. In the summer of 2015, First School hosted a summer institute to begin the work of creating a "culture of caring, competence and excellence" in the schools, including an in-depth exploration by leadership teams on building a culture of collaborative inquiry across PreK through third grade. In the fall and winter of 2015, the Agency of Education collected EduSnap and CLASS baseline data for the approximately 85 teachers. This data will be used to drive decision-making about teaching practices at the classroom, grade, and school levels and approximately 1600 children will be impacted in these five schools. We look forward to tracking progress of these children and teachers as this pilot moves forward.

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.

Several valuable lessons have been learned in the first year of PDG implementation. The first year plan proved to be overly ambitious. Only sixteen of the thirty three entities that had signed on to participate in the grant actually ended up as subgrantees despite extensive contact and support. A major reason for this was the complexity of working through allowable funding for the grant activities and sustainability requirements. One challenge that caused Head Start, public schools, and private entities not to participate was that to create new classrooms new facilities were needed and grant funds do not support construction of major renovation. Other factors included the challenge of maintaining mixed age and income classrooms when the grant could only fund the percentage of cost for eligible children, the funding pressures SU/SDs were feeling as Act 46, a new state law that caps education funding, took effect and Act 166's partial implementation.

These lessons will shape our actions as we begin recruiting subgrantees for year 2. We will have very clear directions and forms to support the budgeting process. We will be able to provide succinct and accurate information about allowable uses of grant funds and give examples of how year 1 subgrantees have used funds to improve quality programs. Most importantly we will have success stories from current subgrantees that will show how some of the limitations the grant imposes have been turned into opportunities in Vermont communities.

The number of new slots created using PDEG funds is 176. The total PDEG funds spent on the 176 new slots is \$2, 246,595 which is 57.2% of PDEG funds used to create new slots.

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.

There were no expenditures during the report period that were outside the approved budget. At the end of the reporting period, we have \$3,093,910 in subgrantee obligations and \$3,007,167 unobligated in our Grants budget and \$977 in a travel obligation. There is \$314,935 unobligated in our miscellaneous category. Total unobligated funds are \$3, 322,102.

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).

We will need to have a realistic numbers of the number of children who will be served during the upcoming fiscal year and the number of new subgrantees in order to identify those changes. The plan is to have that information this spring.

Yes, you will be informed. We are now preparing to disseminate applications for cohort 2/upcoming fiscal year.

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 formal plan for sustainability has not yet been developed. As is evident from the chart that details cost per slot and funding source there are large differences in the amount of work that will need to be done to sustain high quality preschool programs. Two of the supervisory union programs (Rivendell School District and Caledonia Central) are currently funding most of the cost of maintaining high quality program with funds that are not coming from the grant. This impacts less than 8% of the total number of children served through PDEG. Sustainability will not be difficult for them.

There are 59 Supervisory Union/Districts and seven Head Start grantees in Vermont.

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.

There are no discrepancies. Subrecipients' grants are for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. Several superintendents who participated in the budget development process already had or were planning to include full day preschool programs in their school budgets. That could be a major factor for sustaining quality programs for school based programs. The tuition all programs will receive when Act 166 is fully implemented for the next school year will contribute to sustainability but alone will not be enough. Some grant funded activities will have been completed by the end of the grant period so will not need additional funds to continue. Aligning curriculum with the revised early learning standards or training staff to conduct assessments of student progress are examples of this. Another example is moving a teacher from provisional to full licensure. Maintaining teacher salaries and full day programs with comprehensive services are quality elements that will cause sustainability challenges. The grant includes funds for a fiscal analyst who will have as a primary

responsibility helping subgrantees develop sustainability plans.