

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Alabama





U.S. Department of Education PDG Grant Performance Report Cover Sheet

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

Check only one box per Program Office instructions. Annual Performance Report Final Performance Report

General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419A150014 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: _____
 3. Project Title: 84.419A
 4. Grantee Name: Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
 5. Grantee Address: 135 South Union Street
 City: Montgomery State: Alabama Zip: 36130
 6. Project Director Name: Jeana Ross
 Title: Secretary, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
 Phone #: (334) 353-2700 Ext.: 2719 Fax #: _____
 Email Address: jeana.ross@ece.alabama.gov

Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2016 To: 12/01/2016

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	\$17,500,000.00	\$10,000,000.00
b. Current Budget Period	\$17,500,000.00	\$16,000,000.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)	\$52,500,000.00	\$46,000,000.00

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

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No
 b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government? Yes No
 c. If yes, provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: 10/01/2016 To: 09/30/2018

Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: Federal HHS

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

d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:

- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
 Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

10. Performance Measures Status

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



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

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

Grantee State: AL

PR/Award #:

S419A150014

You are required to submit an Executive Summary of up to 3000 words with your Annual Performance Report. This summary should relate to your approved application and summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant, what you learned, and any evaluation results. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered. If there have been any changes to the project from the approved application, those should be explained as well.

Background/Introduction:

The mission of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is to inspire, support, and deliver cohesive comprehensive systems of high quality education and care so that all Alabama children thrive and learn. The Office of School Readiness (OSR) housed within DECE implements Alabama's state and federally funded First Class Pre-K (FCPK) program. DECE is well-positioned to coordinate the state's preschool programs and support alignment across the early childhood and elementary systems. OSR, Head Start State Collaboration Office, and the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program are all housed within DECE. DECE is also the statutorily designated agency to administer and lead the State Children's Policy Council (CPC) which coordinates children's services.

Accomplishments:

During Year 1 of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015), DECE established 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) and provided enhancement funds (improvement) to existing classrooms to elevate them to high-quality FCPK sites. Through new and improved classrooms, FCPK provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 3,351 of the 8,951 target eligible children in communities served by the PDG. Year 1 sites moved to state funding in Year 2 as part of the sustainability plan. In Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) 206 new classrooms were added.

The addition of PDG funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama. During the 2013-2014 school year (prior to the PDG), FCPK classrooms served 5,598 of the state's 60,665 4-year-old children from that year, representing 9.2% of the 4-year-old population. During PDG Year 1, PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool programs for 10,535 of the state's 58,740 4-year-olds (as of December 1, 2015, reported in Year 1 APR). This represented 17.9% of the then current population of 4-year-olds in Alabama. During PDG Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016), combined funds supported access for 14,598 of the state's 59,667 current 4-year-olds (as of December 1, 2016). This represents 24.5% of 4-year-olds in Alabama. There are a total 815 classrooms in FCPK's diverse delivery system, including public schools, private child care, faith-based settings, Head Start, community-based/non-profit centers, college or university settings, and military child development centers.

As Alabama has expanded access to preschool programs, the state has maintained high-quality as the center for all of its efforts. In addition to meeting 11 of 11 quality structural elements as discussed in Section B.2, FCPK has consistently met all 10 quality standards identified by National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) since 2005-2006 and was one of only 6 state-funded Pre-K programs to meet all 10

NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014. According to a July 2016 policy scan conducted by NIEER (Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: a State and Local Policy Scan), Alabama fully meets 11 of its now expanded 15 Essential Elements and partially meets one other.

During the first year of PDG (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) FCPK classrooms served 210 students with disabilities or 6.3% of children served by the grant. This exceeds the percentage of four-year-old children served statewide through the Part B of IDEA program (4.1%).

DECE measures Kindergarten readiness using Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) Spring assessment of 4-year-olds in FCPK programs. TS GOLD identifies readiness by developmental domain based on selected items. Based on the Spring 2016 assessment of FCPK 4-year-olds, percentages deemed accomplished for Kindergarten readiness ranged from 83.3% for math to 94.7% for literacy.

DECE realized a major success in supporting the early childhood/preschool instruction profession during PDG Year 2. Due in large part to the strong, trusting relationships DECE has built with legislators, its history of transparency and accountability, and FCPK's data that show positive educational outcomes of children who participate in the program, DECE was successful in establishing pay parity for Pre-K teachers with K-12 teachers. DECE was able to make the case that pay parity was essential to recruiting and retaining high quality teachers.

Strategies and Activities:

Expanding Access to High-Quality Pre-K:

High-Need Communities (counties) in Alabama were identified for targeted funding through the PDG as part of an initial needs assessment. Using characteristics of high-need and access to a high-quality Pre-K program, 23 of Alabama's 67 counties were determined to be at highest need. Those 23 counties were subdivided into two groups, with priority being given to those with identified failing K-12 public school(s).

High-need criteria included:

- percentage of eligible 4-year-olds;
- percentage of 4-year-olds being served in Pre-K;
- high school graduation rate;
- percentage of English language learners in K-12 public schools;
- percentage of single parent families;
- presence of identified K-12 failing school(s);
- public school retention rates for both first and ninth grade; and
- juvenile violence rate.

DECE released a Request for Proposals, available to all 67 counties, though PDG funding was limited to the 23 highest-need counties. All completed applications were evaluated by independent readers using a 10-point scoring rubric with additional points granted for the following circumstances: poverty based on free or reduced lunch, percentage of nearest public school system, creating new access in underserved areas, being in a high-need county, and being in a high-need county with one or more failing schools. Further, all applicant sites were placed on a detailed map to visualize potential sites in the context of the under-5 population, poverty, and existing early childhood resources including FCPK programs, Head Start, MIECHV programs, and licensed and licensed-exempt child care settings. This visualization assisted with the final decision for awards by reducing crowd-out in areas where adequate opportunities existed for access to high-quality Pre-K, while identifying opportunities for greatest impact based on underserved areas or areas without access to high-quality Pre-K programs. Visits were made to potential sites to evaluate the suitability of location and physical characteristics as well as condition of proposed classrooms.

OSR requirements assure that both the NIEER Quality Indicators and all structural elements listed above as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met in FCPK. The FCPK Framework guides program development and operations. New FCPK classes added as a result of the PDG or through continued state funding are required to adhere to the Framework and Program Assurances as conditions of their sub-grantee award to ensure continued high-quality of programs.

- Lead teachers must have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, at minimum. Lead teachers must also have specialized training in the early childhood field. Auxiliary teachers must have a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent (9 hours of approved coursework in child development), at minimum.
- Lead teachers must have at least 30 hours yearly in-service professional development and training. A full-time Professional Development Coordinator plans high-quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices.
- All teachers in the FCPK diverse delivery system earn salaries that are comparable to those of K-12 public school instructional staff.
- The lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in FCPK classrooms must be 1:10 or better.
- The maximum number of children per classroom must be 20 or fewer; recommended number is 18.
- FCPK provides 6.5 hours per day of high quality and developmentally appropriate activities and instruction, five days per week. OSR recommends 180 days per year for eligible 4-year old children.
- DECE is working in collaboration with other partners to include and support students with special needs. An Inclusion Task Force Committee was created to ensure that all children, regardless of ability, are appropriately identified and served in the least restrictive environment. The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (Standards) reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and learning environment to meet the needs of all children.
- The Standards guide FCPK implementation and are aligned with ALSDE's Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with Disabilities and the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP). The Standards are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and serve as a natural progression to Kindergarten.
- FCPK provides individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities, including children with disabilities and Dual Language Learner (DLL) students.
- DECE is committed to the use of data for program evaluation and to improve and expand access to the FCPK program. Data are used in all aspects of program decision-making, including resource allocation, professional development, classroom quality assessment, and program and child outcomes.
- FCPK promotes family access to services that support their child's learning and development. Physical, vision, hearing, and dental screenings and referrals and support services for families are supported through a partnership with Help Me Grow (HMG) throughout the state. Parents complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) developmental screener. FCPK teachers and staff participate in Strengthening Families (SF) training to support them in building protective factors in their interactions with children and families.
- FCPK implements strong evidence-based health and safety standards in all classrooms, including a requirement to adhere to Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) minimum standards and other program requirements for playground inspection, immunization, background checks, food provision, and physical activity.

FCPK assures quality at both the individual child and classroom levels using research-based observational assessments, including the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and TS GOLD. An external team observed 169 randomly-selected classrooms using the CLASS tool. Observers noted that the teachers had not been trained in CLASS yet most teachers' scores were extremely high; this is contrary to the national trend in which teachers with intensive CLASS training are generally the highest scoring.

Based on TS-GOLD assessment at entry into FCPK programs in the 2015/2016 school year, a large percentage children were performing below widely-held expectations (WHE) for their age across six domains of development (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math; ranging from 31.1% below WHE for literacy to 63.2% below WHE for math). After completing a year of FCPK, the majority of children were meeting or exceeding WHE across all domains (ranging from 92.8% exceeding WHE for math to 98.1% exceeding WHE for literacy. Without FCPK, many of these students would arrive to Kindergarten below expectations for school readiness, threatening their future school success.

System-Building Initiatives:

DECE is collaborating with ALSDE and higher education to develop and implement an early childhood workforce development plan. The plan supports specific pathways for current Pre-K teachers who are not certified or degreed to obtain a 4-year degree or certification. In collaboration with Alabama Partnership for Children, DECE supports T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® ALABAMA, a scholarship program developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the educational process more affordable, increasing wages, and reducing staff turnover rates. Scholarships are currently offered for the CDA assessment fee, associate degrees in child development and early care and education, and bachelor's degrees in child development and early care and education.

In the 2017 Legislative session, DECE and ALSDE proposed 2 new options for earning a Pre-K certificate (Birth to age 4). One option will lead to a Class B Pre-K Professional Educator Certificate; the other will lead to a Pre-K Child Development Certificate. These certificates represent a milestone in Alabama as students who previously graduated with a child development degree were unable to teach in public schools. These certifications would allow them to do so.

Alabama's Early Educator Innovative Program Network provides support for the development and implementation of model early educator preparation programs. During 2016-2017, teams of higher education leaders from 2- and 4-year institutions are developing/implementing model programs and are working to create/improve articulation agreements. Efforts will establish each participating institution as a model program for other Alabama higher education institutions.

DECE has formed collaborations with ALSDE's High School Career Tech (Career Tech) program and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to add the CDA track and credential to their respective programs. DECE is coordinating efforts between programs to streamline and ensure quality of training of future educators. This activity supports child development paths for future teachers and assures appropriate choices related to teaching credentials. DECE is also facilitating discussions regarding articulation of coursework, internships, and collaboration to ensure that all students in both settings have access to quality instruction and support.

DECE and ALSDE are working collaboratively to develop The Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning. The approach will build upon student success and achievement gap closure outcomes realized in FCPK by expanding access to this high quality model and integrating the most successful parts of K-3 initiatives. Currently, DECE and ALSDE are creating a strategic plan to advance the Pre-K-3rd grade learning continuum. An innovative strategy includes the development of an Alabama Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy, a professional learning program for elementary principals serving children Pre-K-3 in Alabama focused on improving knowledge and assuring incorporation of best practices in early childhood education.

The Alabama Secretary of Early Childhood Education was appointed by Governor Bentley as Chair of Alabama's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Implementation Committee, charged with developing the

state's ESSA implementation plan. Key elements of the plan highlight the value of early learning and call for evidence-based interventions as part of school improvement efforts, including recommendations to promote early learning and strengthen the Pre-K-3rd grade learning continuum in Alabama. The final plan has been submitted for federal approval. Three LEAs have participated in a pilot study on Pre-K-K alignment and 1 LEA is participating in Pre-K-1st grade alignment.

Infrastructure and Collaborations:

DECE has directed PDG funds for building and enhancing infrastructure in existing and new preschool classrooms, including employing additional coaches and monitors, ensuring proper equipment and technology, professional development, and other quality-enhancing and systems-building activities that improve the delivery of high-quality preschool programs for eligible children.

One distinctive example of infrastructure investment that ensures high quality is DECE's rigorous coaching and monitoring program. The Alabama Reflective Coaching (ARC) Model, developed by DECE in cooperation with faculty at University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education (UABSOE), was designed to give FCPK teachers the requisite support and skills to provide a high quality environment that supports school readiness. ARC provides customized support for FCPK teachers using a tiered model of coaching designed to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher. First Class Coaches and First Class Monitors have distinct roles that assure quality in all classrooms and compliance with FCPK policies and guidelines.

DECE has led an initiative to expand school readiness assessments at the start of Kindergarten. In 2015-2016, OSR piloted the use of TS GOLD-Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). KEA provides teachers and parents with important criterion-based information about a child's learning and development in 6 domains at the beginning of Kindergarten. In 2016-2017, OSR expanded the pilot program. An unanticipated benefit of introducing TS GOLD KEA is that many Kindergarten teachers adopted TS GOLD for the entire school year and first grade teachers have begun using the assessment and results to guide instruction.

ALSDE divisions of Special Education and Federal Programs (Title I and Title III) are actively working with FCPK programs to ensure children receive appropriate services. Preschool special educators have been trained to use TS GOLD, and coaches and monitors have been trained to work with FCPK teachers to provide services for children in special education. DECE has established an Inclusion Task Force Committee as mentioned above.

DECE has developed a comprehensive plan to support children who are Dual Language Learners (DLL). All FCPK classrooms are required to complete a home language survey, and when children who are DLL are identified, additional objectives can be assigned through TS GOLD. DECE has also partnered with the UABSOE through Project IMPACT-PD, a coaching and professional development project designed to improve preschoolers' language acquisition and DLL instruction.

DECE is partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health to fund a position for an Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) State Coordinator who will lead the Alabama ECMH Initiative and provide oversight for the development and implementation of Alabama's ECMH Framework. The Coordinator will lead the modification of the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health Endorsement system for implementation in Alabama; expand ECMH consultation; and build capacity of the early childhood workforce to address developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges of infants, young

children, and families to ensure healthy social-emotional wellness and promote school readiness. DECE has also expanded its capacity for evaluation of FCPK outcomes and longitudinal research. A diverse research evaluation team supports the state's ability to identify and present programmatic

accomplishments, student performance, and cost-savings as well as address longitudinal research capacity. This research team includes members from DECE, an external data specialist (ThinkData Solutions), the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA), UABSOE, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health (UABSOPH).

Conclusion:

The state is making steady progress towards its ambitious but achievable goals of increasing access to high-quality preschool programs to 26% of eligible 4-year-olds through 895 classrooms by the end of the grant period. These gains will be sustained through state allocations to maintain newly-added classrooms.

Alabama's Governor and state legislature have historically given substantial increases for the expansion of FCPK and are committed to incrementally increasing funds to serve all families who choose for their children to participate in Pre-K. Public support for voluntary, high-quality preschool programs is high in Alabama, and advocacy efforts are led through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance.

The success of FCPK is due in large part to the strong working relationship DECE has with the Alabama Governor and state legislature, as well as DECE's diverse, well-qualified state-level leadership team.

Legislative relationships support funding to maintain and enhance the infrastructure needed to expand the program while assuring high quality standards. State leadership supports regional and local FCPK staff through professional development and leadership training, assuring that they in turn provide high quality coaching, monitoring, and support to FCPK teachers in local classrooms. These characteristics, combined with DECE's leadership in engaging and meaningful collaborations with other agencies and organizations, investments in data for program evaluation and accountability, workforce and infrastructure-building activities, and commitment to building a comprehensive early childhood system, create the foundation for school achievement and lifelong success for Alabama's children.



U.S. Department of Education
PDG Annual Performance Report
Grant Status Form
Explanation of Progress (524B Section A)
Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: AL PR/Award #: S419A150014

Section A: Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (narrative)

1. Project Objective

1(a) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant. Describe the State's progress in meeting this Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure based on enrollment of Eligible Children in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant as of December 1, 2016.

Overview

The mission of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is to inspire, support, and deliver cohesive comprehensive systems of high quality education and care so that all Alabama children thrive and learn. DECE is well-positioned to coordinate the state's preschool programs and support alignment across the early childhood and elementary systems. OSR, Head Start State Collaboration Office, and the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program are all housed within DECE. DECE is also the statutorily designated agency to administer and lead the State Children's Policy Council (CPC), which coordinates children's services. The Office of School Readiness (OSR), housed within DECE is implementing Alabama's state and federally funded First Class Pre-K (FCPK) program.

Accomplishments, Strategies, and Activities

The addition of Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama. During Year 1 (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) of the PDG, DECE established 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) and also provided enhancement funds (improvement) to existing classrooms to elevate them to high quality FCPK sites. Through new and improved classrooms, FCPK provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 3,351 of the 8,951 target eligible children in communities served by the PDG. Year 1 sites moved to state funding in Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of PDG as part of the sustainability plan. In Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) 206 new classrooms were added.

FCPK awards grants at 3 levels: Plus/Intervention/New Classrooms; Excellence; and Tiered. Excellence and Tiered grants are equivalent to Improved State Preschool Programs. Plus/Intervention/New Classrooms awards are intended to fully establish a new classroom, including equipment, coaching, professional development, assessment tools, and curriculum materials. These 1-year awards are funded at \$120,000-\$150,000 and grantees must apply for either a Tiered or Excellence award after their first year. Excellence awards are available to any existing program and intended to provide resources for a classroom that has an existing funding source (such as Head Start, Title I in public schools, or tuition-based childcare). These awards are limited to \$45,000 per classroom. Tiered awards are intended to support qualified teachers and high quality early learning environments. The funding level for these awards ranges from \$80,100 to \$92,700 based on the poverty level of the location of the classroom as indicated by free/reduced lunch population. Tiered awards are for 3 years with annual renewal. Supplemental grants were

also given to assure pay parity for Pre-K teachers with K-12. The delivery system is diverse, including public schools, private child care, faith-based settings, Head Start (community action only), community-based/non-profit centers, college or university settings, and military child development centers. PDG funds were initially targeted to high needs communities identified through a comprehensive needs assessment.

Refer to GPRA 1 (b) for OSR programs and policies that support quality for the FCPK system as a whole as well as classroom and child-level research-based assessments that assure quality and consistency. See Section A. Part B.1-B.2 for detailed information on how OSR ensures quality in FCPK, including a discussion of how the program assures that both the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) Quality Indicators and all structural elements listed as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met.

In preparing to apply for the PDG, High-Need Communities in Alabama were identified for targeted funding through the PDG. These communities (defined as counties) were identified through a comprehensive needs assessment that combined 7 characteristics of high-need in the community with the level of available access to a high-quality Pre-K program. While all of Alabama's 67 counties have factors that would qualify them as High-Need Communities, counties representing those with the highest needs were ranked based on the following criteria:

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

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

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

After selecting sub-grantees, DECE followed its standardized methods (Alabama Pre-K Quality Assurances Contract) to assure sites agree to, abide by, and incorporate the standards and practices of the

Alabama FCPK Framework. All classrooms are assigned a First Class Coach and a First Class Monitor. DECE Programs are monitored and evaluated using Framework guidelines and standards to maintain quality and promote student achievement consistently in all programs. See GPRA 1 (d) and Section A. Parts B.1-3 for more detailed information on the Alabama FCPK Framework, Quality Standards, and the First Class Coaching and Monitoring Program.

Secretary Ross has assured that DECE has a fully-functioning and adequate infrastructure to provide statewide leadership and support for expanding FCPK. A full time Professional Development Coordinator plans high quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration for Pre-K teachers, directors, and OSR staff. OSR has divided the state into eight regions that are purposefully structured in a manner that promotes increased support, consistency of program delivery, and increased accountability.

Efforts during Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of the PDG also included enhancing infrastructure in existing and new preschool classrooms, employing additional coaches and monitors, ensuring proper equipment and technology, professional development, and other quality-enhancing activities that improve the delivery of high-quality preschool programs to eligible children. Investments have also been made to further develop the agency's capacity for evaluation of FCPK outcomes and longitudinal research.

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.

During the first year of PDG (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) FCPK classrooms served 210 students with disabilities, which is 6.3% of children served by the grant. This exceeds the percentage of four-year-old children served statewide through the Part B of IDEA program (4.1%). We believe the number of children with disabilities served is underreported in the FCPK data system due to the timing of reporting (many children were in the IEP referral process during the reporting period) and initial misunderstanding of the process for entering disability status in the data system. Regional Directors made efforts to confirm the number of children with disabilities in each FCPK classroom to address these challenges and additional children were identified through discussion with teachers. DECE has focused on helping teachers understand the referral process, including developing a Power Point approved by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and adding a link to the referral process on the ALSDE website. First Class Coaches work with teachers to understand IEP referrals and First Class Monitors are now following up each month with directors to make sure children who have been referred are getting the outcome results entered into the DECE database. Entering disability status into the FCPK data system will continue to be a topic of coaching and professional development. DECE has a special education specialist who travels across the state to observe and assist in the screening a referral of those with suspected disabilities.

FCPK is committed to ensuring equal access and treatment for students with disabilities, and every effort is made to ensure the elimination of possible disability barriers within preschool programs, curriculum, and activities. This strictly adheres to the provisions outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the anti-discrimination policy established by DECE, which specifically states that no person shall be discriminated against due to a disability. To ensure access, a qualified special education consultant is

involved with all grant activities. This individual is responsible for assuring that the program model is implemented with respect to the inclusion of all children with appropriate accommodations in the least restrictive environment.

In 2010, DECE and the Special Education section of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) created one set of standards for all preschool children in the state. The document, Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (Standards), is a result of the shared mission that all children should be provided school readiness experiences that meet their individual needs. The Standards guide FCPK implementation and are aligned with the ALSDE's Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with Disabilities and the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP). The Standards reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and the learning environment to meet the needs of all children. The Standards are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and serve as a natural progression to Kindergarten, supporting seamless transitions for all students. Further, the Standards contain a strategic plan for the inclusion of children with disabilities in all early childhood systems and programs, emphasizing shared responsibility and commitment to inclusion through policy changes and resource allocation. Objectives were added to many of the Standards to provide a hierarchy of learning targets for children with functional level delays, a systematic measurement tool for monitoring programs, accountability, and effectiveness of IDEA Part B preschool programs.

During Year 2, OSR is refining a comprehensive system to support children who enter FCPK with an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP), children who need referrals or who are in the referral process while in FCPK, children who were tested but found ineligible for IEP, and children who have challenging behavior but no referral has been made.

DECE is working in collaboration with other state partners to include and support students with special needs across all early childhood programs. An Alabama Inclusion Task Force Committee (AITF), chaired by the Part C Early Intervention Director for Alabama, was created by DECE during year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of the PDG and includes members from Early Intervention (EI), ALSDE, DECE, a faculty member from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education (UABSOE), and Local Education Agencies (LEA). AITF members are co-creating an inclusion strategic plan for the state of Alabama to provide support and guidance at the LEA, school, and program levels to ensure that all children, regardless of disability, are being appropriately identified and served in the least restrictive environment. This plan strongly emphasizes inclusion as a shared responsibility and a top priority and demonstrates a commitment to inclusion through policy changes and appropriate resource allocation at all levels.

Through the development of guiding principles and initial activities, AITF is making progress to support infrastructure and capacity within all early childhood education settings so that children with special health or educational needs are better served. This partnership will allow for better services, smoother transitions, and improved understanding of how to teach and provide supports to families and young children with special health care needs or educational challenges. The task force is focusing its work on public awareness, data tracking across agencies, creation of a system of inclusive care, and development of interagency approaches to inclusion in all early childhood settings. Within these key areas, activities will include policy work, professional development of existing and entering early childhood workforce, establishment of better processes and procedures for early identification and referrals within Alabama's early childhood system, and compliance with key federal and state regulations for inclusion of children with disabilities. See Section A:Part B.2 for more information on AITF.

DECE and FCPK staff members are actively working with teachers and parents in the screening and referral processes. FCPK has a proven track record in identifying, referring, and serving children with

special needs. Physical, vision, hearing, and dental screenings and referrals and support services for families are provided for all children either on-site or through partnerships with local providers. Referrals are supported through a centralized referral-based hub and a partnership with Help Me Grow (HMG) throughout the state. All parents complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) developmental screener prior to the start of school and before children are assigned to classrooms. During year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016), the AITF recommended moving to centralized registration to assist in early identification and help programs place those with disabilities across multiple classrooms.

DECE is partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health to fund a position for an Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) State Coordinator. This position will provide overall coordination of the ECMH Initiative in Alabama as well as oversight and leadership for the development and implementation of Alabama's ECMH Framework. In addition, the Coordinator will lead the modification of the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health Endorsement system for implementation in Alabama; expand ECMH consultation in Alabama through collaboration with other state agencies, non-profit organizations, and national organizations; and integrate recommendations into early childhood mental health training efforts in Alabama to build capacity of the early childhood workforce to address developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges of infants, young children, and their families to ensure healthy social-emotional wellness and promote school readiness. During Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016), 10 FCPK teachers are piloting the Electronic- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (e-DECA) to provide strategies for the development of resilient children, including a strength-based approach for supporting initiative, attachment, and self-control for a strong social emotional development.

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 addition of PDG funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in Alabama. During Year 1 (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) of the PDG, DECE established 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) and provided enhancement funds to existing classrooms to elevate them to high quality FCPK sites. Through new and improved classrooms, FCPK provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 3,351 of the 8,951 target eligible children in communities served by the PDG. Year 1 sites moved to state funding in Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of PDG as part of the sustainability plan. In Year 2, 206 new classrooms were added. Alabama's Governor and state legislature have historically given substantial increases for the expansion of FCPK and are committed to incrementally increasing funds to serve all children who choose to participate in Pre-K.

See GPRA 1 (a) for a description of the FCPK grant process. Refer to GPRA 1 (b) for OSR programs and policies that support quality for the FCPK system as a whole as well as classroom and child-level research-based assessments that assure quality and consistency. See Section A. Part B.1-B.2 for detailed information on how OSR ensures quality in FCPK, including a discussion of how the program assures that both the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) Quality Indicators and all structural elements listed as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met.

FCPK engages in extensive outreach through multiple venues and partnerships to increase public awareness of potential sub-grantee funding opportunities and the availability of FCPK slots in local communities. In addition to presentations and website announcements, both the Governor's Office and the Alabama School Readiness Alliance regularly issue press releases in efforts to grow awareness and support outreach given the increasing demand for high quality Pre-K in Alabama. DECE leadership travels around the state to communicate the importance of early learning and provide an understanding of high quality programming.

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 2016-17 school year.

Overview

During the 2013-2014 school year [prior to the PDG], FCPK classrooms served 5,598 of the state's 60,665 four-year-old children from that year, representing 9.2% of the four-year-old population. During Year 1 of the PDG (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015), PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool

programs for 10,535 of the state's 58,740 four-year-olds (as of December 1, 2015, reported in year 1 APR). This represented 17.9% of the then current population of four-year-olds in Alabama. During Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016), PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool programs for 14,598 of the state's 59,667 four-year-olds during the 2016-2017 school year (as of December 1, 2016). This represents 24.5% of four-year-olds in Alabama. Year 1 (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) sites moved to state funding in Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of PDG as part of the sustainability plan. This was made possible through strong leadership from Governor Robert Bentley, bi-partisan legislative support for FCPK, and additional state funding.

As of December 1, 2016, there are 815 FCPK classrooms. The delivery system is diverse, including public schools, private child care, faith-based settings, Head Start, community-based/non-profit centers, college or university settings, and military child development centers. The breakout of number of classrooms by type is as follows:

Public School = 584
Head Start = 109
Private Childcare = 64
Faith-Based = 23
Community-Based = 22
College/University = 8
Military Child Development Centers = 3
Private School = 2

The addition of PDG funds to state allocations significantly increased the percentage of young children who are receiving voluntary, high-quality preschool in Alabama. The state is making steady progress towards its ambitious but achievable goals of increasing access to high-quality preschool programs to 26% of four-year-olds through 895 classrooms by the end of the grant period. These gains will be sustained through state allocations to maintain newly-added classrooms. This is a realistic expectation as Governor Bentley has provided critical, priority-setting leadership for funding FCPK. Additionally, the Alabama State Legislature has demonstrated its belief in and commitment to state Pre-K education by providing level or increased funding each year with significantly increased appropriations in the budget years of 2010-2017. See Section B.3 for more detailed information on FCPK budget allocations. Public support for voluntary, high-quality preschool programs is high in Alabama, and advocacy efforts are led through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance. In the current legislative cycle, which began in early February, 2017, Governor Bentley proposed a \$20 million increase for FCPK. The Alabama State Legislature is currently considering this budget request.

Activities and Strategies

See GPRA 1 (a) for a description of the FCPK grant process.

FCPK engages in extensive outreach through multiple venues and partnerships to increase public awareness of potential sub-grantee funding opportunities and the availability of FCPK slots in local communities. In addition to presentations and website announcement, both the Governor's Office and the Alabama School Readiness Alliance regularly issue press releases in efforts to grow awareness and support outreach given the increasing demand for high quality Pre-K in Alabama.

OSR Program Guidelines and Classroom Guidelines both establish policies and procedures to ensure consistent attendance. These policies and procedures assure that FCPK slots are available for families who truly desire placement in a FCPK classroom. FCPK providers are required to formulate written procedures for addressing issues regarding attendance and tardiness. These procedures are shared with families during orientation and reviewed by the FCPK Monitor. Daily attendance records are maintained on-site. Attendance procedures specify actions to be taken by the FCPK provider if attendance issues become problematic. For example, the procedures could require a phone call to parents after three unexcused absences or tardies; a letter to parents from the director after six absences or tardies; a parent conference after eight or nine absences; or referral to the FCPK Coach after 10 absences. The goal of the attendance policy is to assist families in establishing and maintaining regular school attendance patterns.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than 4 days per month without medical or other reasonable explanation. FCPK providers are required to document efforts to assist parents/guardians of children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early. Providers meet the parent/guardian to determine reason(s) and potential resolutions. Inability to resolve chronic absenteeism after documented interventions is referred to the FCPK Regional Director for dismissal consideration. The program may only drop the child from the class roll if approval is granted and received, in writing, from the FCPK Regional Director. Children who are consecutively absent for 10 days without medical or other reasonable explanation are replaced with children from the FCPK waiting list. Although data on chronic absenteeism are not available for this reporting, DECE has added a data field to its database and to the monitoring checklist used by First Class Pre-K Monitors to capture this for the coming year.

In some instances, students may need a modified school day to be successful. Modified schedules (i.e., less than 6.5 hours of instructional time a day) requires prior approval from the FCPK Regional Director and is part of an IEP. Programs must contact their FCPK Coach and Regional Director to discuss requests for modified schedules and must provide a proposed daily schedule, including times and activities, a justification for the proposed schedule, and a written plan describing how the child's schedule will be increased over time to the typical 6.5 hour day. Modified schedules are used in conjunction with child-specific interventions to increase a child's tolerance up to a full-day of instruction.

OSR has a strict student discipline policy that is presented in both the Program Guidelines and Classroom Guidelines. No form of physical or mental punishment is permitted. This includes corporal punishment of any kind, use of time-out and behavior charts, stoplights, and/or other behavior documentation displays that may publically shame children. Only developmentally-appropriate practices that support the development of self-regulation are approved methods of correcting behavior issues in the FCPK program. Examples of appropriate practices include: redirection, encouragement, problem solving, effective planning, calming strategies, and smooth, engaging transitions. It is more effective to reinforce positive behavior by using immediate, effective verbal acknowledgement that describes a child's appropriate words and actions. The program provides a Conscious Discipline book study, including participation in a webinar series, Becoming the Best You Can Be, the Seven Powers for Conscious Adults (You Can't Teach What You Don't Know). Suspension and expulsion from FCPK programs are always a last resort and only occur after all other options and interventions are unsuccessful in resolving the classroom problems. Extensive documentation and approvals are required.

FCPK assures quality at both the individual child and classroom levels using research-based observational assessments, including the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD).

An external team observed 169 randomly-selected classrooms across two phases using the CLASS tool. Observers noted that teachers had not been trained in CLASS yet most teachers' scores were extremely high; this is contrary to the national trend in which teachers with intensive CLASS training are generally the highest scoring. Final aggregate scores were higher in Positive Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, Behavior Management, Productivity, and Quality of Feedback than the 2014 Head Start National Scores. Average CLASS scores were higher than 5 on Emotional Support, higher than 5 on Organizational Support, and higher than 4 on Instructional Support. In year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016), CLASS continues, with results being used to develop individual professional development plans for teachers.

To support high quality learning environments and alignment of effective instruction to student success, all children in FCPK classrooms are assessed using TS GOLD, an ongoing, observation-based, research-validated assessment system. Grounded in current research related to child development and learning, the TS GOLD assessment includes 38 objectives across six domains of development (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math) that are associated with school success based on school readiness standards.

Based on TS-GOLD assessment at entry into FCPK programs in the 2015/2016 school year, a large percentage children were performing below widely-held expectations (WHE) for their age across six domains of development (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math; ranging from 31.1% below WHE for literacy to 63.2% below

WHE for math). After completing a year of FCPK, the majority of children were meeting or exceeding WHE across all domains (ranging from 92.8% exceeding WHE for math to 98.1% exceeding WHE for literacy. Without FCPK, many of these students would arrive to Kindergarten below expectations for school readiness, threatening their future school success.

The school readiness domains with the largest increases in the percentage of children meeting or exceeding WHE were math (56 percentage points), cognitive (42.9 percentage points), and social-emotional (41.4 percentage points). The observed largest gains for math skills is an important finding as research suggests early math skills not only predict math achievement through high school, but are also a better predictor of later reading achievement than even early reading skills.

TS GOLD establishes assessment of meeting expected growth over time based on normed scaled score ranges calculated as the difference between the Spring and Fall time point assessments for each developmental domain. Subset analyses of meeting growth expectations were conducted for low income children (free or reduced lunch status), Dual Language Learners (DLL), and students receiving special education. Among these vulnerable populations, more than eight in 10 children who received FCPK met growth targets by the end of the Pre-K year. Meeting expected growth targets is an especially important outcome for children in vulnerable groups who may not meet WHE for their age, yet make expected growth gains that show progress and reflect closing the achievement gap.

TS GOLD assessments offer an opportunity for family engagement in a child's learning experience. At least two individual conferences per year between the lead teacher and parent/guardian are required. These conferences are held after each GOLD checkpoint during the year.

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 2 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.

Overview

In December 2002, OSR adopted the following definition of "School Readiness": A condition whereby children enter school with

- (a) an enthusiasm for learning,
- (b) an ability to function in a social setting,
- (c) age-appropriate communication and problem solving skills,
- (d) age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and
- (e) optimal health.

Despite this broad definition, school readiness expectations have been as diverse as the number of school districts in the state, and Alabama has not adopted a consistent, mandatory assessment for all kindergarten programs.

School readiness is assessed in FCPK using the observation based assessment, TS GOLD. Students are

assessed at entry (Fall), midpoint (Winter), and exit (Spring) of the preschool year, with scores compared to WHE for four-year-olds as provided by TS GOLD for each time point. Results are typically dichotomized to “below expectations” and “meets or exceeds expectations.” TS GOLD also provides expected growth targets by domain based on normed scaled score ranges calculated as the difference between the Spring and Fall time point assessments. Meeting expected growth targets is an especially important outcome for children in vulnerable groups who may not meet WHE for their age yet make expected growth gains that show progress and reflect closing the achievement gap. Finally, TS GOLD provides an assessment of Kindergarten readiness by domain based on selected items. Subset analyses are possible by race, ethnicity, low income status (free or reduced lunch status), English Language Learners (primary language other than English), and students receiving special education (has Individualized Education Program).

TS GOLD is mandated for use statewide in all FCPK classrooms, including all high-needs communities and in both state-funded and PDG-funded sites. DECE has been using TS GOLD for 4½ years, since the 2012-2013 school year.

Strategies and Accomplishments

OSR supports reliability in administration of scoring TS GOLD through the provision of extensive training and support. Participation in one session of TS GOLD Intro and Lab is a requirement of all new lead and auxiliary teachers of FCPK. Additionally, Directors of FCPK are required to attend one session from TS GOLD Reporting. Training is widely-available and geographically convenient. In Fall 2016 alone, 17 three-day sessions were offered across the state. Nearly 800 hours of training on TS GOLD and GOLD support has been provided by an OSR staff member since the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. All FCPK teachers are required to complete professional development modules online through TS GOLD as well as TS GOLD interrater reliability (IRR) training.

Given the limitations of the data template for this measure, an average number of children who tested “accomplished” for readiness across the 6 domains was included in the accompanying workbook. The following charts present readiness disaggregated by domain and selected subgroups. These data are presented publicly through legislative presentations and presentations to interested groups. A series of related issue briefs is posted on the DECE website, and one specific to school readiness is forthcoming.

A. Spring 2016 Kindergarten Readiness “Accomplished” by Developmental Area, TS GOLD, All First Class Pre-K 4 year-olds

Social-emotional = 94.5% (vs. 38.6% in Fall 2015 pre-test)
 Physical = 94.6% (vs. 40.6% in Fall 2015 pre-test)
 Language = 89.1% (vs. 29.7% in Fall 2015 pre-test)
 Cognitive = 93.8% (vs. 30.6% in Fall 2015 pre-test)
 Literacy = 94.7% (vs. 37.5% in Fall 2015 pre-test)
 Math = 83.3% (vs. 12.5% in Fall 2015 pre-test)

B. Spring 2016 Kindergarten Readiness “Accomplished” by Developmental Area, TS GOLD, Selected Subgroups of First Class Pre-K 4 year-olds

Subgroup	Social-Emotional	Physical	Language	Cognitive	Literacy	Math
White	95.1%	94.5%	91.5%	94.9%	94.9%	84.7%
Black	94.0%	94.7%	87.5%	92.9%	95.2%	83.0%
Other Race	93.8%	95.1%	83.5%	92.5%	92.7%	78.0%
Hispanic	93.4%	95.0%	78.0%	90.8%	89.4%	71.4%
Low Income	93.7%	94.3%	86.7%	92.9%	94.2%	81.8%
English Language Learners	94.6%	95.2%	74.0%	91.2%	88.8%	68.3%
Special Education	79.9%	80.0%	63.2%	78.4%	77.9%	64.1%

In addition to the use of the 4 year-old Pre-K TS GOLD assessment, DECE has led an initiative to expand school readiness assessments at the start of Kindergarten. In Fall of the 2015-2016 school year, OSR piloted the use of TS GOLD-Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). KEA provides teachers and parents with important criterion-based information about a child's learning and development in 6 domains at the beginning of Kindergarten.

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

The pilot program included volunteers from 21 school systems statewide and gathered data from approximately 2,700 students, some of whom had previously received FCPK and some who had not. For the 2016-2017 school year, OSR expanded the pilot program, including a partnership with Bold Goals to expand full participation within one of the largest districts in Central Alabama, where 29 schools assessed 1,896 children at Kindergarten entry. An unexpected benefit of introducing TS GOLD KEA is that the 2½ day training provided information to teachers on child development, leading to kindergarten teachers adopting TS GOLD for the entire school year. Furthermore, first grade teachers have begun using the assessment and results to guide instruction and a Pre-K to 3rd Grade Continuum grant process will begin in the Fall of 2017 with an 8 program pilot. See Section A:Part B.4 for more information on birth to 3rd grade continuum strategies.

DECE continues to partner with ALSDE toward its goals of statewide, universal testing for all students at Kindergarten entry. This effort will support a consistent measurement and reporting system for school readiness, provide classroom information for teachers, and facilitate longitudinal studies of the impact of FCPK.

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.

Overview

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

Accomplishments

As Alabama has expanded access to preschool programs, the state has maintained high-quality as the center of all its efforts. In addition to meeting 11 of 11 quality structural elements as discussed in Section B.2, FCPK has consistently met all 10 quality standards identified by NIEER since 2005-2006 and was one of only 6 state-funded Pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014. According to a July 2016 policy scan conducted by NIEER (Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: a State and Local Policy Scan), Alabama fully meets 11 of its now expanded 15 Essential Elements and partially meets one other. OSR requirements assure that both the NIEER Quality Indicators and all quality structural elements listed in Section A. Part B.2 as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met in the FCPK Program.

See Section A. Parts B.1-3 for more detailed information on the Alabama Framework, Quality Standards, and the First Class Coaching and Monitoring Program.

Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

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

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

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

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

Overview

DECE allocated 24.2% of PDG funds for building and enhancing infrastructure in existing and new preschool classrooms, including employing additional coaches and monitors, ensuring proper equipment and technology, professional development, and other quality-enhancing and systems-building activities that improve the delivery of high-quality preschool programs to eligible children.

Strategies

Key infrastructure activities include: higher education initiatives to develop a Pre-K certificate; core competencies and field experience in birth-age 4 years; Strengthening Families training for all staff and teachers; teacher scholarships; increased communication of outcomes through research briefs; expanded outreach through Facebook, Twitter and a website; leadership Academy with Dr. Jim Squires; partnerships that resulted in a CDA in high school; Principals/Directors Leadership Academy; partnership with HMG; Pre-K-3rd grade continuum; pay parity Pre-K-12; and online training through My Teachstone, based on CLASS and individual teacher professional development plans. These are discussed in greater detail in Sections A: Part B.3-4 and Part C.1-2.

One distinctive example of infrastructure investment that ensures high quality is DECE's rigorous coaching and monitoring program. The Alabama Reflective Coaching (ARC) Model, developed by DECE in cooperation with faculty at UABSOE, was designed to give FCPK teachers the support and skills they need to provide a high quality environment that supports school readiness. ARC provides customized support for FCPK teachers using a tiered model of coaching designed to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher. The model was developed for use with FCPK coaches, FCPK directors, lead teachers, auxiliary teachers and support personnel. First Class Coaches and First Class Monitors have distinct roles that assure quality in all classrooms and compliance with FCPK policies and guidelines. Additional details on coaching and monitoring roles are provided in Section A. Part B3.

The underlying framework of ARC includes the use of shared planning between the learner and coach, observations by and of the learner, participatory action by the learner, learner reflection on actions, and feedback by the coach on the learner's reflections. Reflection is the most important step in the process and is what differentiates coaching from problem solving, consultation, monitoring, and information-sharing. The goal is to promote continuous improvement by assisting learners in analyzing their practices and behavior through the use of a reflective discussion with the coach. The person being coached recognizes existing strengths and discovers ways to build upon those strengths in order to address identified questions,

goals, plans, priorities, and interests.

The tiered coaching approach is customized for four levels based on teacher experience, with specific supports provided and differing coaching roles. The foundation of the model applies to all teachers and includes TS GOLD support, GOLD Training, FCPK Guidelines Training, and attendance of the FCPK Conference. The next tier applies to Beginning Teachers, who may be new to teaching or have been teaching and are not progressing. At this level, teachers benefit from clear direction and extensive modeling. The coach's role with beginning teachers is that of a guide. Beginning Teachers are provided a visit at least once a month with follow-up via telephone, video conference, and email; a mentor teacher; and New Teacher training and GOLD New Teacher Training. The next tier addresses Progressing Teachers who understand and practice the basics and are ready to learn more. The coach's role at this tier is that of a developer. The coach may need to take the initiative to present suggestions, but the coach and teacher can brainstorm together and plan collaboratively. This level of teacher requires at least a monthly coaching visit. Refined Teachers are at the highest tier of the ARC model. These teachers have a high level of implementation expertise, and others look to them as leaders, perhaps serving as a mentor for a new teacher. They are reflective about their practice and attuned to new developments in early childhood education. The coach's role with Refined Teachers is that of a catalyst, communicating respect for the teacher's mastery and encouraging them in leadership roles. This level of teacher does not require as many coaching visits per year.

Monitoring is provided by DECE employees through an individualized approach similar to that of coaching. Through the use of the Compliance Monitoring System (CMS), monitors have the ability to increase or decrease the level of support needed at each program. The CMS is designed to lend more assistance to programs that are in need of more intensive support and may be at-risk of non-compliance. Monitors visit classrooms to ensure quality and use data gathered in the CMS to determine the needed level of support for each program. If a FCPK classroom is in compliance with all guidelines, it will receive a follow-up visit within 30 to 60 days. Those with 3 or fewer non-compliance issues will receive a follow-up visit within 10 days. A classroom with 4 to 6 non-compliance issues will receive a follow-up visit within 5 days and will be placed on probation. Those with 7 to 10 issues are given a follow-up visit in 3 days and funding is terminated if issues are not resolved. Communication between monitors and program directors occurs on-site (generally monthly), over the phone, and via email. Monitors also communicate with FCPK coaches to ensure a seamless delivery of technical assistance to quickly resolve any matters that may impact a FCPK classroom.

Additionally, infrastructure funds have been used to further expand professional development opportunities for teachers, auxiliary teachers, and directors/administrators from sub-grantees and potential sub-grantees. A full-time Professional Development Coordinator plans high-quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration. During Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of PDG, FCPK staff members delivered 1,288 hours of professional development.

DECE has also partnered with the UABSOE through Project IMPACT-PD, a coaching and professional development project designed to improve preschoolers' language acquisition and DLL instruction. Strategies include a planned language approach, coaching support for classrooms with DLL students, and individualized support for DLL students.

FCPK employs 8 Regional Directors to support coaches, program directors, and teachers in local communities. During Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) of PDG, these Regional Directors participated in an extensive leadership training provided by Dr. Squires of NIEER. One participant shared that the session "provided me with tools to distinguish between managing and leading my team. I am able to reflect on my responsibility as a director and on the work we do each day to change

the lives of students in Alabama. The training created an opportunity for me to improve professional and personally.”

DECE has also supported professional development for its key state leadership team. Two staff members have completed Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) Leadership Academy and another is currently participating.

Research-based observational assessments, including the CLASS and Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Preschool Program (DECA-P) are administered in classrooms to measure and ensure quality. An external team observed 169 randomly-selected classrooms across two phases using the CLASS tool. Observers noted that the teachers had not been trained in CLASS yet most teachers' scores were extremely high, which is contrary to the national trend where teachers with intensive CLASS training are generally the highest scoring. Final aggregate scores were higher in Positive Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, Behavior Management, Productivity, and Quality of Feedback than the 2014 Head Start National Scores. DECA-P environment results for all classrooms and averaged across the nine items indicate 84.9% score “almost always”.

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

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.

Overview and Accomplishments:

By building sustainable relationships and developing meaningful collaborations, DECE has increased access for children to attend a state-funded high quality Pre-K program, growing from serving just 3,600 children - or 6% of eligible 4-year-olds - to more than 14,500 children - or 25% of eligible 4-year-olds - in just 4 years, while maintaining high quality in all programs. FCPK has been nationally recognized as a high-quality program by NIEER. FCPK has consistently met all 10 quality standards identified by NIEER since 2005-2006 and was one of only 6 state-funded Pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014. According to a July 2016 policy scan conducted by NIEER (Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: a State and Local Policy Scan), Alabama fully meets 11 of its now expanded 15 Essential Elements and partially meets one other.

Activities and Strategies:

OSR requirements assure that both the NIEER Quality Indicators and all structural elements listed above as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met in the FCPK Program.

1. High staff qualifications: Lead teachers must have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, at minimum. Lead teachers must also have specialized training in the early childhood field. Auxiliary teachers must have a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent (9 hours of approved coursework in child development), at minimum.
2. High-quality professional development: Lead teachers must have at least 30 hours yearly in-service professional development and training. Each grantee is funded for 187 school days to include 7 days of professional development for staff. A full-time Professional Development Coordinator plans high-quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration for Pre-K teachers, directors, and First Class Coaches and Monitors. DECE has also partnered with UABSOE through Project IMPACT-PD, a coaching and professional development project designed to improve preschoolers' language acquisition and DLL instruction. The ARC model provides customized support for FCPK teachers using a tiered model of coaching designed to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher.
3. A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1: Lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in classroom must be 1:10 or better.
4. A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications: Maximum number of children per classroom must be 20 or fewer; recommended number is 18

5. A Full-Day program: FCPK provides 6.5 hours per day of high quality and developmentally appropriate activities and instruction, five days per week. OSR recommends 180 days per year for eligible 4-year old children.
6. Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities: DECE is working in collaboration with other partners to include and support students with special needs. An Inclusion Task Force Committee was created and comprises members from EI, ALSDE, DECE, and LEAs. These partners are co-creating a plan to ensure that all children, regardless of disability, are being appropriately identified and served in the least restrictive environment. See below and Program Requirement (k)(2) discussion for more details on the Inclusion Task Force. The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children reflect the philosophy of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs and the importance of teachers making accommodations to the curriculum and the learning environment to meet the needs of all children. The Standards contain a strategic plan for the inclusion of children with disabilities in all early childhood systems and programs, emphasizing shared responsibility and commitment to inclusion through policy changes and resource allocation.
7. 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: The Framework incorporates program guidelines, classroom guidelines, early learning standards, professional development, coaching methods, and monitoring practices to create a replicable model for High-Quality Pre-K programs. The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (<http://children.alabama.gov/alabama-developmental-standards-for-preschool-children>) guide FCPK implementation and are aligned with ALSDE's Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with Disabilities and the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP). The Standards are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and serve as a natural progression to kindergarten. See below for more detail.
8. Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities: The Standards emphasize shared responsibility and commitment to inclusion of all children through policy changes, accommodation, and resource allocation. DECE is working in collaboration with other partners to include and support students with special needs. Further, DECE has developed a comprehensive plan to support DLL. All FCPK classrooms are required to complete a home language survey, and when children who are DLL are identified, additional objectives can be assigned through the state assessment tool, TS GOLD. DECE is focusing on a coaching and professional development project designed to improve preschoolers' language acquisition and DLL instruction. OSR promotes the use of a tiered system of intervention, Response to Intervention (RtI), to provide differentiated instruction. FCPK teachers assess all children's abilities and progress using TS GOLD to guide instruction and support alignment with early learning standards.
9. Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12

instructional staff: In 2015-2016, Alabama introduced policies to create parity, including with raises going forward. All teachers in the FCPK diverse delivery system earn salaries that are comparable to those of K-12 public school instructional staff. Establishing parity for Pre-K teachers was accomplished in large part due to the trusting relationships DECE has built with legislators, its history of transparency and accountability, and FCPK's data that show high quality and positive educational outcomes of children who participate in the program. By educating superintendents, directors, and legislators about the importance of having high quality teachers with specific expertise and professionalism to support young children during this critical developmental period, DECE was able to make the case that pay parity was essential to recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. The work of the Pre-K teacher was valued and recognized as important, with pay equal to K-12 teachers, lifting the professional in general. Further, when the Alabama State Legislature passed a 4% raise for K-12 teachers, the agency successfully advocated for additional budget allocations to extend that raise to Pre-K teachers as well.

10. Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement: DECE is committed to using data to improve and expand access to the FCPK program. Data are used in all aspects of program decision-making, including resource allocation, professional development, classroom quality assessment, and program and child outcomes. First Class Monitors provide site visits to ensure quality and compliance with all program guidelines. Pre-K teachers are required to assess children's abilities and progress using TS GOLD. Research-based observational assessments, including the CLASS and DECA-P are administered in classrooms to ensure the program is meeting children's needs. A diverse, external academic research evaluation team meets at least monthly with FCPK leadership to evaluate program outcomes and examine student performance and outcomes and potential cost-savings related to retention, chronic absenteeism, and special education placement. The research team is also building program capacity for longitudinal research to look at longer term outcomes of the program into middle and high school and beyond.
11. 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: Physical, vision, hearing, and dental screenings and referrals and support services for families are provided through all classrooms and are supported through a centralized referral-based hub and a partnership HMG throughout the state. All parents complete the ASQ-3 developmental screener. FCPK teachers and staff participate in Strengthening Families (SF) training to support them in building protective factors in their interactions with children and families. During Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) DECE began sending out a monthly newsletter highlighting family engagement strategies and strategies to implement the SF components. Some schools and communities are implementing the SF model of Parent Cafés.
12. Evidence-based health and safety standards: FCPK provider sites must hold a current license from the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR). School systems that are not DHR-licensed must adhere to DHR minimum standards and

safety requirements for day care and nighttime centers; including both classrooms and playgrounds. DECE has ensured that each region has one person with the NPPS National Playground Safety Inspector credential to ensure that sites are supported with playground design and maintenance. This person provides inspections for FCPK playgrounds as well as sites participating in DHR's Child Care Division Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Additionally, sites are supported through trainings on loose parts, natural playgrounds, and playground design. DECE also presents at local conferences to support non-OSR sites in this important safety area. DECE has worked with vendors to ensure that playground designs offered are developmentally appropriate and directors have access to numerous vendors with various designs. All FCPK teachers have access to 6 best practice training modules for caregivers of infants and toddlers through a partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Building a Healthy Start: Professional Development for Caregivers of Infants and Toddlers Project. The project's purpose is to improve the quality of infant and toddler child care in Alabama by integrating nationally recognized health and safety standards. Topical areas addressed by the training modules are include nutrition, physical activity, disaster preparedness, environmental health, social emotional development, and child abuse and neglect prevention (<http://www.adph.org/healthystart/Default.asp?id=6473>). Background checks are performed for all employees. Families grant permission for vision, hearing, dental, and physical screenings to be completed either on-site or through partnerships with providers. All parents complete the ASQ-3 developmental screener. Referrals are made as necessary with follow-up through HMG. Evidence of age-appropriate, up-to-date immunizations (blue card) or signed religious beliefs affidavits against such immunizations are maintained on-site for each child. Programs must provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks. The school day must include 60 minutes of gross motor activities.

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

The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (Standards), focusing on 3-5 year-olds, are based on current research on teaching and learning from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Council of Teachers

of Mathematics (NCTM), the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Standards conform to recommendations by the National Research Council. The Standards are organized around 9 areas of development: Approaches to Learning Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Science; Creative Arts; Technology; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Health and Daily Living. Each area of development identifies goals followed by specific learning standards that are developmentally appropriate across the 3-5 year-old age range.

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

FCPK Program Guidelines, Classroom Guidelines, and Grant Assurances have been created and published by OSR to ensure that Pre-K programs provide a safe and high-quality learning environment for all preschool children. The Classroom Guidelines provide descriptions and definitions of optimal classroom environment characteristics, basics of classroom management, ideas for classroom displays, guidance on lesson planning, and instructions on the use of the assessment tool TS GOLD for individualized, intentional instruction. All FCPK classrooms are required to have a research-based instructional plan for effective teaching and learning that meets standards of developmentally-appropriate practice. Pre-K teachers are required to assess children's abilities and progress using the TS GOLD Assessment Tool and to enter observations at checkpoint dates during the program year. The support of coaches and monitors for each FCPK teacher ensures that program and classroom guidelines are met. OSR evaluates all classrooms using the CLASS or the DECA-P. Coaches, together with teachers, develop individualized improvement plans that reflect the assessment results and personal improvement goals of teachers.

Evaluations of statewide early childhood Pre-K systems indicate that the most effective programs link early learning standards with curriculum and assessment. OSR has developed early learning standards for guiding First Class instructional practices. TS GOLD is the state assessment tool that guides the appropriate alignment of the Standards with teaching instruction. Therefore, if teachers and administrators are choosing a curriculum, it is important that it aligns with the Standards and GOLD assessment. Although OSR does not endorse any one commercial curriculum, all FCPK classrooms implement the Framework,

the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children, First Class Program Guidelines, First Class Classroom Guidelines, the ASQ-3 Developmental Screener, and the TS GOLD Assessment. Curriculum content is comprehensively presented and reinforced with intentional teaching strategies for Pre-K teachers. Implementation of the curriculum is embedded into the Alabama Reflective Coaching Model that includes effective teaching practices, curriculum content based on early learning standards, and professional development. DECE reviews curricula to provide guidance on which early learning childhood curricula are most likely aligned to the Alabama Framework and the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children. All curricula must promote appropriate instructional practice and enhance learning and development while being consistent with the intent of the OSR Program Framework to assist children in mastering skills to ensure school readiness.

Three taskforces were formed in Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) to create shared understanding and priorities in combining resources and best practices to create a comprehensive, cohesive continuum of high quality early childhood education from birth to 5 that will successfully transition through the early childhood education years for all children. These include the Head Start Task Force, the Childcare Task Force, and the Alabama Inclusion Task Force.

The goal of the Head Start Task Force is to create an effective and efficient coordination of efforts and programs to serve children throughout Alabama. Initial action steps included: reviewing points of collaboration developed from an integration chart and crosswalk of guidelines and regulations; beginning the process of defining partnerships, resulting in a collaborative model early childhood program that other states can emulate; developing a method to document each step of this endeavor; and evaluating to identify challenges and solidify successes. Progress to date includes: completed review of OSR guidelines regarding selection of children; clarified with monitors regarding the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) requirements that Head Start (HS) must meet; informed HS Directors that at least 2 children must represent a diverse socio-economic population and provided definitions of how this can be done; reviewed with OSR Monitors the required vs. suggested classroom equipment; revised OSR monitoring form to include an area of suggestions for improvement; created a sample HS budget that can be shared with all HS Directors, Regional Managers, Coaches and Monitors; and made recommendations for braiding Pre-K funds with HS, focusing on raising salaries of all HS teachers with BA degrees teaching in a 4-year old classroom. OSR/HS classrooms now receive a supplement to bring salaries comparable to beginning public school pay.

The goal of the Childcare Task Force is to support the diverse delivery system of high quality FCPK in early care settings. Initial action steps included: developing an open dialog between DECE and childcare providers in creating an understanding of the unique needs of the childcare industry in Alabama; creating business partnerships to provide financial consultation and business administration guidance; and providing additional professional development unique to early care and education. Progress to date includes: regular meetings

for ongoing discussion to support the success of 4-year old Pre-K in the childcare settings; financial support for the Alabama Association for Early Care & Education (AALECE) annual conference; and hosting an initial meeting with key bank leaders in the state capital.

The Alabama Inclusion Task Force (AITF) is also discussed in the earlier section of Program Requirement (k)(2). The vision for AITF is “All Alabama early childhood programs and services working together to embody the values, policies and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to have access and participate in systems of high quality, developmentally appropriate, culturally competent, cohesive services allowing full participation in community and society.” This vision applies broadly to the early childhood system, including public and private preschool, center- and family-based child care, Early Head Start and Head Start, and the IDEA, in partnership with families and communities. The goal for the work of the AITF is that all young children with disabilities have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations within groups representing national proportionality. Initial action steps included: developing a plan for inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. Progress to date includes: Member reviewed their agency policies and guidelines; conducted a survey of the number of children with disabilities being served to establish a current baseline; reviewed FCPK 2015-2016 guidelines addressing inclusion; enhanced relationships between special education support at the local level and classroom teachers to support guidance; and added a link to the ASQ-3 screener on the initial registration form for random selection to FCPK classrooms.

Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

Describe the number and percent of Eligible Children served and the cost per slot.

During Year 1 (2015-2016 school year) of the PDG, DECE established 117 new classrooms (exceeding the goal of 100 new classrooms) and provided enhancement funds (improvement) to 46 existing classrooms to elevate them to high quality FCPK sites. Through new and improved classrooms, FCPK provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 3,351 of the 8,951 target eligible children in communities served by the PDG. Year 2 (2016-2017 school year; as of December 1, 2016) targets included establishing an additional 100 classrooms and serving 1,800 new children. The cost per slot was \$6,336 from PDG funds plus at least a 25% local match is required.

There are no proposed or approved changes in targets for Years 3-4.

3. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships (Selection Criteria E of the application)

Describe the extent to which the State has collaborated with each Subgrantee to ensure that each Subgrantee is effectively implementing High-Quality Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the application) and how the State ensures strong partnerships between each Subgrantee and LEAs or other Early Learning Providers, as appropriate.

Overview

The efforts of many organizations support the success of FCPK. OSR works collaboratively with other local, state, and federal organizations to provide sustained support for each site. Cross-sector services include partnerships with the DHR, Head Start, Early Head Start, ALSDE, LEAs, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), Auburn University, Alabama Power Company, and the Alabama Partnership for Children. Each of these organizations offers assistance to FCPK sites, enabling OSR to provide comprehensive services including health, vision, and physical screenings, as well as assistance for children and families in need of additional school support including special education services for students with disabilities or developmental delays and for DLLs.

Each FCPK subgrantee is required to be a participating member of the county Children's Policy Council. See also Section A:Part 2 for information on 3 critical taskforces developed in Year 2 that support system-wide collaboration.

Strategies and Accomplishments

Provision of high-quality Pre-K programs requires the implementation of effective instructional practices. OSR works to ensure the success of FCPK classrooms by providing tiered, individualized professional development for all sub-grantees using the ARC Model (discussed in detail in Section A. Part B.1). Professional development needs are identified through CLASS and TS GOLD, as well as by recommendations of the assigned First Class Coaches and Monitors (see below). Coordination of professional development activities is managed through STIPd, the statewide database of approved professional development opportunities for Pre-K-12 educators. Sub-grantees may participate in professional development at no cost. STIPd allows the teacher, site, and OSR to document and access records of training sessions attended by FCPK directors and teachers. OSR also hosts an annual FCPK Conference. The most recent event, attended by over 2,300 people, included speakers such as Rachel Sperry, Isabel Baker, Don Monopoly, and E.B. Lewis.

Improving teacher and administrator early education training programs and professional development are vital components of the FCPK Framework. The most distinctive activity to support professional development is the ARC Model, a coaching and monitoring support system. The model includes both a First Class Coach and a First Class Monitor. The role of the Coach is distinct from the Monitor so that nuances associated with coaching Pre-K teachers do not compromise the evaluative/monitoring role of the Monitors. Given that principles of best practice in teaching support differentiated instruction, discussions at all

levels of the system center on the value of providing different things for different people at different times. A tiered model of coaching has been developed and implemented to meet the individual professional development needs of each teacher based on previous formative evaluation. The coaching model provides individualized support for Pre-K teachers based on needs that arise during the school year through a bottom-up approach with top-down support to develop a grassroots professional development system. An annual conference and differentiated professional development are implemented throughout the year utilizing local, state, and national presenters based on teacher needs. A full time Professional Development Coordinator plans high quality professional development for continuous improvement for the highest quality early childhood education instructional practices and administration for Pre-K teachers, directors, and OSR staff. OSR has divided the state into 8 regions (each supported by a Regional Director) that are purposefully structured in a manner that promotes increased support, consistency of program delivery, and increased accountability. Regional Directors often provide professional development for teachers in their regions in addition to the extensive offerings delivered by OSR.

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

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

work with programs to ensure that quality indicators such as fiscal accountability, enrollment, and teacher qualifications are met and sustained throughout the year.

In a 2016 survey, Pre-K Directors in local communities overwhelmingly noted the benefits of OSR approaches to quality. Related to coaching, 97% indicated that OSR coaching was beneficial to their teachers and 86% identified OSR coaching as either extremely or very effective in supporting teacher use of evidence-based teaching practices. Specific to monitoring, 85% identified OSR monitoring as extremely or very effective in supporting Directors' use of evidence-based teaching practices, and 96% indicated that they benefitted from OSR monitoring.

FCPK Regional Directors were surveyed in 2016 to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the program on sub-grantees. One shared the following: "Last year in_____we had the perfect storm: 2 new teachers in one classroom, 18 4-year-olds (of the 18, 8 of them had some type of special need), and a brand new program. With the Alabama Reflective Coaching Model and support from a team of coaches and monitors, we were able to turn a program around and provide a safe, loving environment for children where relationships blossomed and learning flourished. This year the team of teachers have developed confidence and have a background of experiences to draw from which has provided children with a warm learning environment to set them up for life long success."

DECE is collaborating with ALSDE and higher education to develop and implement an early childhood workforce development plan with the goal of having quality teachers and multiple avenues to obtain certification. The plan supports specific pathways for current Pre-K teachers who are not certified or degreed to obtain a 4-year degree or certification. In collaboration with Alabama Partnership for Children, DECE supports the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) initiative. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ALABAMA is a scholarship program that was developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the educational process more affordable, increasing wages, and reducing staff turnover rates. Scholarships are currently offered for the CDA (Child Development Associate) assessment fee, associate degrees in child development and early care and education, and bachelor's degrees in child development and early care and education. To date, 105 current FCPK lead and auxiliary teachers have received T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. During 2016, 5 bachelor recipients were lead teachers, and 16 were auxiliary teachers in a FCPK classroom. There were 14 associate degree recipients and 9 CDA scholarship recipients working as auxiliary teachers. During 2016, 5 bachelor degree recipients and 2 associate degree recipients graduated. Based on information collected to date, the average wage increase for bachelor recipients was 4% and 6% for associate degree recipients.

OSR is participating in a study conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to examine the impact of the HighScope preschool curriculum and professional development for FCPK classrooms. Participating classrooms receive HighScope training for lead and auxiliary teachers, HighScope classroom materials plus access to online library, assessments,

audiovisuals, and other resources, and mentoring coach support to teachers, including instructional observation and feedback. Individual classrooms have volunteered to participate with 48 sites randomly assigned to the immediate training group (treatment group) and 50 sites randomly assigned to the delayed training group (control group). The treatment group initiated HighScope Curriculum Training in the fall of 2016 and will use the curriculum when they complete training. The control groups will begin HighScope Curriculum Training in the fall of 2018. Teachers in this group will continue to use their business-as-usual approaches to curriculum training and use.

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).

Overview

DECE is well-positioned to coordinate the state's preschool programs and support alignment across the early childhood and elementary systems. OSR, Head Start State Collaboration Office, and the MIECHV Program are all housed within DECE. DECE is also the statutorily designated agency to administer and lead the State Children's Policy Council (CPC). CPC is designated by state law as a coordinating entity for children's services; it brings together agencies that impact children. Governor Bentley designated the State CPC as the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), meeting the requirements described in Section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837(b)). The re-formation of CPC/ECAC in 2015 has resulted in improved coordination, collaboration, and oversight of all services and programs for children in Alabama. Through the creation of the Pre-K Collaboration Task Force, partnerships between DECE and ALSDE have been established. Monthly meetings of the Task Force bring together groups that serve Alabama preschool children - Title I, Head Start, Special Education, Migrant, Homeless, and Child Subsidy - to address barriers to the delivery of a high quality program to all children. In 2016, DECE made significant progress in leading efforts toward birth to third grade alignment, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation, early childhood workforce development, and partnerships with other agencies and programs that are part of the early childhood system in Alabama.

Accomplishments, Activities, and Strategies

A high quality early education provides the foundation for student success in school. Having a seamless learning continuum from Pre-K to 3rd grade will align and integrate a comprehensive educational approach to student learning during the years when children have the greatest growth potential and ensure that children enter classrooms that promote their on-going educational progress by building on what they have previously learned. DECE and ALSDE are working collaboratively to develop The Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning. This approach will build upon student success and achievement gap closure outcomes realized in FCPK by expanding access to this high

quality model and integrating the most successful parts of K-3 initiatives. Governor Bentley expressed support for extending the FCPK principles and approaches into the K-3rd grade education system at the Alabama FCPK Conference in January 2016. Currently, DECE and ALSDE are creating a strategic plan with specific activities to advance the Pre-K-3rd grade learning continuum. DECE has awarded funds to the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools to support an Alabama Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy (AECELA). The Council will develop a high quality professional learning and resource program to meet the needs of elementary principals serving children from ages 3 to 8, or Pre-K-3 in Alabama. The purpose of AECELA is to improve the attitudes and knowledge regarding early childhood practices in education to assure incorporation of best practices.

Secretary of Early Childhood Education Jeana Ross was appointed by Governor Bentley as Chair of Alabama's ESSA Implementation Committee, created by Executive Order and charged with developing the state's implementation plan for ESSA. The committee has 32 members, including superintendents and members of local school boards, school principals, teachers, ALSDE officials, and education policy advocates from across Alabama. Additionally, 3 OSR leadership staff members participated on subcommittees to support plan development. Key elements of the plan highlight the value of early learning and call for evidence-based interventions as part of school improvement efforts, including recommendations to promote early learning and strengthen the Pre-K-3rd grade learning continuum in Alabama. The final plan has been submitted for federal approval. Currently 3 LEAs have participated in a pilot study on Pre-K-K alignment and 1 LEA is participating in Pre-K-1st grade alignment.

DECE is leading an ongoing effort to expand Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) using TS GOLD. See GPRA 1(c) for detailed information. An unexpected benefit of introducing TS GOLD KEA is that the 2½ day training provided information to teachers on child development, leading to kindergarten teachers adopting TS GOLD for the entire school year. Furthermore, first grade teachers have begun using the assessment and results to guide instruction and a Pre-K to 3rd Grade Continuum grant process will begin in the Fall of 2017 with an 8-program pilot.

DECE is leading efforts in Alabama to support early childhood workforce development. These efforts include several strategies focused on higher education leadership, articulation of coursework between 2- and 4-year institutions, alignment of coursework with NAEYC requirements for early childhood certification, the development of Pre-K/early childhood certification options to ensure that those with an early childhood education degree have field experience in classrooms with children ages birth-4 years, and efforts towards pay parity between Pre-K and elementary educators. In 2015-2016, parity policies were approved to assure all teachers in the FCPK diverse delivery system earn salaries that are comparable to those of K-12 public school instructional staff.

The 2015 Early Educator Workforce Summit initiated efforts to define key components and content of early childhood teacher preparation for inclusion in every Alabama

certificate or degree program. Summit participants also initiated discussions concerning articulation between 2- and 4-year institutions and collaboration between teacher education and child development departments. Following the 2015 Summit, a subcommittee was formed as the Alabama's Early Educator Innovative Program Network. The purpose of this network is to provide support for the development and implementation of model early educator preparation programs. During 2016-2017, tiered technical assistance is provided to higher education leaders (deans, faculty) through working meetings of teams that include two- and four-year institutions. These teams are developing/implementing model programs and working to create/improve articulation agreements. Teams make program changes within their institutions that lead to policy recommendations for creating exemplary early educator preparation programs, establishing each participating institution as a model program for other Alabama higher education institutions.

DECE has formed collaborations with ALSDE's High School Career Tech (Career Tech) program and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to add the CDA track and credential to their respective programs. DECE provides supports by speaking with interested high schools and community colleges, speaking at Career Tech conferences, providing support to high school and community college teachers and parents as they learn about the CDA, and assisting in the creation of curriculum and portfolio assignments. DECE is coordinating efforts between programs to streamline and ensure quality of training of future educators. This activity supports child development paths for future teachers and assures appropriate choices related to teaching credentials. DECE is also facilitating discussion regarding articulation of coursework, internships, and collaboration to ensure that all students in both settings have access to quality instruction and support.

In the 2017 Legislative session, DECE and ALSDE proposed two new options for earning a Pre-K certificate (Birth to age 4) that will be issued by ALSDE. One option will lead to a Class B Pre-K Professional Educator Certificate (will follow NAEYC-based rules) and the other will lead to a Pre-K Child Development Certificate (will require NAEYC accreditation). These certificates represent a milestone in Alabama as students who previously graduated with a child development degree were unable to teach in public schools. These certifications would allow them to do so. Creation of the proposed options expands options for lead teachers. Other options for certification currently include K to 6th grade and Birth to 3rd grade.

The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children guide FCPK implementation; they are aligned with ALSDE's Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with Disabilities and the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP). The Standards are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and serve as a natural progression to kindergarten. Each FCPK program develops a transition plan to support children and their parents in successfully transitioning to Kindergarten. This involves partnerships with the schools and other Early Learning Providers in organizing visits to the Kindergarten classroom to meet the teacher and parent workshops on Kindergarten readiness. Working with the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC), OSR is assisting

communities in developing community-wide Kindergarten Transition Teams (KTT) that identify resources for high quality early learning experiences, linkages between early childhood programs and schools into which they feed, and engagement of parents and families into planning a smooth and effective transition into Kindergarten. Teams include elementary school administrators, teachers, family support personnel, and others who can ensure that the first few grades of school are developmentally and educationally appropriate and supportive of children with identified special needs to transition smoothly from Early Intervention. Schools provide data to KTT on learning outcomes and educational success. KTT also provides resources and professional development to support and enable the use of an effective kindergarten readiness assessment, TS GOLD, a key component of the team's work that supports identification of gaps in readiness and informs professional development planning.

DECE has supported and participated in the work of DHR's Child Care Division as it develops a QRIS. All FCPK classrooms in public schools, Head Start, and childcare settings are required to participate in QRIS. DECE also supports DHR through an interagency agreement with Early Head Start-Child Care Programs by providing TS GOLD training and support and training on the ARC Model. DECE offers technical support to DHR with TS GOLD accounts, checkpoint and data concerns, and planning TS GOLD implementation.

DECE is building its capacity for outcome evaluation and longitudinal research. Though initial analyses have focused on birth to third grade experiences, the addition of longitudinal data will allow the team to examine outcomes into high school and beyond.

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 2 Target* differs from the *Year 2 Actual*.

The Alabama State Legislature approved \$10 million in state funding to support FCPK during Year 1 (2015-2016 school year; as of December 1, 2015) of the PDG. These monies are in addition to the \$17.5 million in federal funds that came to the state and represent a state match of more than 50% of the federal contribution. Governor Bentley has made expanding access to high quality, voluntary Pre-K programs through DECE his number one educational priority in the 2015-2019 strategic plan. He has also committed to including at least \$10 million per year in his budget throughout the cycle of the PDG. For Year 2 of the PDG, the Alabama State Legislature appropriated a \$16 million dollar increase to sustain and expand FCPK, again representing more than a 50% match to the federal contribution of \$17.5 million. In the current legislative cycle that began in early February, 2017, Governor Bentley has proposed a \$20 million increase for FCPK. The Alabama State Legislature is currently considering the budget. FCPK is on track to meet matching funds requirements.

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.

Overview

Governor Bentley appointed DECE Commissioner Jeana Ross as the Secretary of Early Childhood Education, and charged the agency, through its OSR, with administering Alabama's state and federally funded Pre-K program. DECE infrastructure and other statutory designations are discussed in Section A. Part B.4.

In 2016, DECE continued to make significant progress in creating a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade for children and their families within each high need community. In addition to the discussions below, please see Section A. Part B.4 for details on progress for this priority.

Accomplishments, Activities, and Strategies

During the January 2016 FCPK Conference, Governor Bentley expressed his overwhelming support for the quality and outcomes achieved through the FCPK program. Highlighting

the program's successes, he announced his support for extending the FCPK principles and approaches into the K-3rd grade education system. This integrated approach was again highlighted during the Governor's State of the State address in February 2017. DECE and ALSDE are working collaboratively to develop The Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning. The approach will build upon student success and achievement gap closure outcomes realized in FCPK by expanding access to this high quality model and integrating the most successful parts of K-3 initiatives. Currently, DECE and ALSDE are creating a strategic plan with specific activities to advance the Pre-K-3rd grade learning continuum.

DECE implements several strategies to support Kindergarten transitions. See Section A. Part B.4 for a discussion of the alignment of the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with the ALSDE's Developmental Standards for Preschool Children with Disabilities and the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP) and the work of community-based Kindergarten Transition Teams. In addition to these strategies, in 2016, DECE implemented a pilot program for play-based Kindergarten, focusing on educating through developmentally-appropriate instruction and offsetting misalignment between teaching practices that focus on how young children learn and those that focus on academic achievement. Seventeen Kindergarten and 3, 1st grade teachers in 4 schools across 4 districts committed to a 2-year pilot of whole child instruction including: social emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, technology, and English language acquisition. These domains of learning were selected based on the criteria within NAEYC's position statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice as well as alignment with TS GOLD assessment. Pilot program participants received a 2-day training, Play and Academic Rigor, provided by Tom Rendon and funded by the Kellogg Foundation; curricular training provided by TS GOLD; monthly coaching sessions and bi-weekly follow-up phone conferences; and classroom materials to support their implementation of the curriculum. Participants were invited to participate in the TS GOLD pilot of the newly-developed Creative Curriculum for Kindergarten. As a result of this pilot project, 4 districts across the state have committed to become partners in whole child instructional practices.

Partnerships have also been formed to support programs in meeting the needs of children with disabilities and DLLs. ALSDE divisions of Special Education and Federal Programs (Title I and Title III) are actively working with FCPK programs to ensure children receive appropriate services. Preschool special educators have been trained to use TS GOLD, and coaches and monitors have been trained to work with FCPK teachers to provide services for children in special education. DECE has established an Inclusion Task Force Committee, including members from EI, ALSDE, and LEAs. These partners are co-creating a plan to ensure that all children, regardless of ability, are being appropriately identified and served in the least restrictive environment. DECE has developed a comprehensive plan to support children who are DLL. All FCPK classrooms are required to complete a home language survey, and when children who are DLL are identified, additional objectives can be assigned through TS GOLD. DECE has an ongoing coaching

and professional development project designed to improve preschoolers' language acquisition and DLL instruction.

DECE has identified and expanded several initiatives to support the continuum of early learning and development and assure that children are healthy and ready for school success. Led by the state's public/private organization dedicated to the needs of children, Alabama Partnership for Children, and in partnerships with several state agencies, FCPK has been closely involved in programs to coordinate comprehensive services for families and children, specifically SF and HMG.

The SF framework is implemented in FCPK programs as a parent engagement model that incorporates:

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

The state's SF initiative is delivered through local family resource centers that provide a range of supports and services to families. Rather than build these supports within individual FCPK programs, OSR's emphasis is on connecting and linking through professional development, resource sharing, and community-wide planning, thus eliminating duplication of effort. SF training is offered to all 2nd year FCPK teachers.

Through a partnership with 12 other organizations, the HMG campaign was formed to link families to community resources, provide effective care coordination, and facilitate partnerships with state and local communities to improve the accessibility and quality of support services for families and children. HMG is an intentional and focused set of strategies that build on existing resources and programs. HMG ensures that all FCPK children receive developmental screenings with the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE and connects families to the state's referral hotline 2-1-1. Through PDG funding, this service was expanded from a regional pilot to a statewide service available to all Alabama families. The 2-1-1 network is the single point of entry for families and providers and facilitates appropriate referrals and connections through a centralized, online hub. HMG is delivered in partnership with physicians, mental health professionals, United Way-2-1-1 Connects, early childhood programs, EI, and programs for children with special health care needs. By connecting FCPK programs to this network for early childhood assessment programs and referrals to appropriate interventions and support services, local costs are minimized through strong partnerships and collaboration with the existing and effective network. OSR provides professional development to all lead teachers, assistant teachers, and directors regarding how to use HMG. FCPK Monitors, assigned to all classrooms, receive professional development training to expand their ability to link families to these statewide

initiatives.

Additional support for families is provided through First Teacher, Alabama's MIECHV Program. First Teacher is a division within DECE and provides home visitation services to pregnant women and families with children ages birth to 5 years. These services are delivered through three evidenced-based home visiting models: Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, and Nurse-Family Partnership. DECE is working with the FCPK Research Evaluation Team and the First Teacher Research Evaluation Team to identify children who received home visiting and Pre-K services to better understand the impact of these programs on child health, family strengths, and school readiness.

DECE is building its capacity for outcome evaluation and longitudinal research. ALSDE utilizes iNow, a student data system, for students in K-12. This system manages data for demographics, assessment, attendance, and performance of students. Students are issued unique state student identification (SSID) numbers which follow them throughout their school career. Through strong collaboration with ALSDE, DECE has worked diligently to collect identifying information that is matched with the SSID. These two departments have hired a shared staff person to continue to match student data, identify state Pre-K students, and follow their progress as a group. De-identified data are shared with the Pre-K Research Evaluation Team, a diverse group of researchers and practitioners that supports outcome evaluation and research. Data analyses focus on student performance on standardized assessments of reading and math at third grade, retention, absenteeism, special education, cost-savings, and pre- and post-FCPK performance on TS GOLD. Though initial analyses have focused on birth to 3rd grade experiences, the addition of longitudinal data will allow the team to examine outcomes into high school and beyond.

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.

Overview, Strategies, and Accomplishments

See narrative for GPRA 1(a) for detailed information on how Alabama identified High-Need Communities for PDG and the process for making classroom awards.

In the 2015-2016 school year, FCPK provided access to high-quality preschool programs for 3,351 eligible 4-year-olds via 2,910 new slots and 441 improved slots in existing programs. This was accomplished through the dedication of 71% of PDG funds in identified high-needs communities. PDG funds and state allocations combined supported access to high-quality preschool programs for 14,598 of the state's four-year-olds during the 2016-2017 school year (as of December 1, 2016). This represents 24.5% of four-year-olds in Alabama.

In addition to meeting 11 of 11 quality structural elements as discussed in Section B.2, FCPK has been nationally recognized as a high-quality program by NIEER. FCPK has consistently met all 10 quality standards identified by NIEER since 2005-2006 and was one of only 6 state-funded Pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014. According to a July 2016 policy scan conducted by NIEER (Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: a State and Local Policy Scan), Alabama fully meets 11 of its now expanded 15 Essential Elements and partially meets one other.

OSR requirements assure that both the NIEER Quality Indicators and all quality structural elements listed in section 2 as “evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality” are met in the FCPK Program. The Framework incorporates program guidelines, classroom guidelines, early learning standards, professional development, coaching methods, and monitoring practices to create a replicable model for high-quality Pre-K programs. The components of this Framework include resources and support to enhance performance and learning and alignment with the NIEER Quality Standards. Components are measured through on-going observation and authentic, research-based assessment. The Framework guides program development and program operations to ensure that Alabama's children are prepared for school achievement and lifelong success. Programs are monitored and evaluated using Framework guidelines and standards to maintain quality and to promote student achievement consistently in all programs. New Alabama FCPK classes added as a result of the PDG or through continued state funding are required to adhere to the Framework and Program Assurances as conditions of their sub-grantee award to ensure continued high-quality of programs. See section 2 for more detailed information on how FCPK assures high quality in all classrooms.

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, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

There were no discrepancies between the sub-recipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. All funds were expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017).

We do not anticipate any substantive changes to the State's PDG budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017).

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.

Alabama has developed a plan of sustainability for each of the expansion classrooms. Each new group of expansion classrooms will be funded in Year 1 with federal grant funds. After Year 1, classrooms will be funded with state appropriations. Alabama Governor Robert Bentley is committed to funding voluntary high-quality Pre-K programs and has made it his priority over the next 4 years so that funding will continue to increase to sustain all programs created. FCPK has strong bi-partisan support in the state legislature. The following chart is a simple depiction of how the funds will be used to sustain high-quality Pre-K Programs after the grant period.

	Initiated with Federal Funds	Sustained with State Funds
Year 1 2015-2016	Cohort 1	-
Year 2 2016-2017	Cohort 2	Cohort 1
Year 3 2017-2018	Cohort 3	Cohorts 1 and 2
Year 4 2018-2019	Cohort 4	Cohorts 1, 2, and 3
After 2019	-	Cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4

Each cohort will operate 1 full year on federal grant funding before being sustained by state funding.

Budget Year	State Appropriation	OSR Number of FCPK Classrooms	Number of Students	Number of Eligible Children	% of Eligible Children in FCPK
2005-2006	\$4,326,050	57	1,026	60,002	1.7%

2006-2007	\$5,369,898	59	2,062	60,565	1.8%
2007-2008	\$10,000,000	128	2,304	62,354	3.7%
2008-2009	\$15,490,831	185	3,330	59,803	5.5%
2009-2010	\$18,376,806	215	3,870	61,093	6.0%
2010-2011	\$18,376,806	217	3,906	62,104	6.0%
2011-2012	\$19,087,050	217	3,906	62,104	6.0%
2012-2013	\$19,087,050	217	3,906	59,987	6.5%
2013-2014	\$28,624,146	311	5,598	60,665	9.0%
2014-2015	\$38,462,050	419	7,542	59,216	13.0%
2015-2016	\$48,462,050	652	11,736	58,740	20.0%
2016-2017	\$64,462,050	811	14,598	59,736	25.0%

Each \$10 million increase results in approximately 100 new classrooms. The PDG allows start-up funds in addition to operating funds for first year of classroom operation. To sustain the 100 new classrooms established through PDG, the cost is approximately \$8.6 million.

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, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

There were no discrepancies between the sub-recipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. All funds were expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

