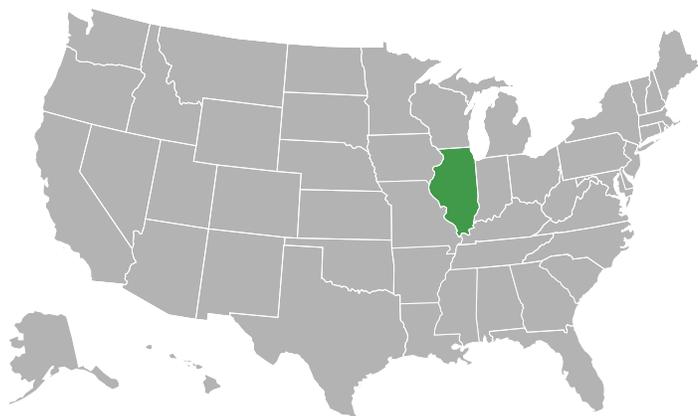


# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

## FY2017 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

### Illinois



Preschool Development Grants

AUGUST 2018





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

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 08/31/2020

Grantee State: IL

PR/Award #: s149b150004

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

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

## Key Accomplishments

In our third year of implementation, Illinois successfully served 4,029 children across 19 high-need communities. Illinois prioritized enrollment of children with four significant risk factors; of the enrolled children in year three, 4.8% were children experiencing homelessness, 4.3% were children involved in the child welfare system, 39.5% were from families below 50% of the federal poverty limits (this is a significant increase from prior years as income was not entered for 2,209 children last year, so we can attribute the increase to better data quality/collection. Household income criteria is mandatory in the Student Information System in FY19) and 13.1% were children with IEPs. This data demonstrates that our Sub-grantees continue to successfully develop systems and strategies to recruit and enroll the most at-risk children in Illinois, placing us on a clear trajectory towards our state goal of preparing 80% of Illinois children for Kindergarten success by 2021.

The programs serving the 4,029 children are implementing all twelve elements of high-quality preschool programs and have built new and sustainable capacity to meet the need of the most at-risk children and families. Each Sub-grantee has hired a staff member as an instructional leader, with specific and dedicated responsibility for planning and implementing embedded professional development and advancing instructional quality. In addition, programs have hired staff dedicated to parent education, family engagement and support, and implementing linkages to comprehensive services.

Illinois continues to support the enhancement of this infrastructure in our Sub-grantees by continuing an innovative program support initiative. Inspired by the framework of Illinois' highly successful model of teacher coaching, connecting instructional coaches to teachers for a two-year period to develop their instructional capacity and skill set, this program support initiative engages specialist to work individually with programs in building sustainable systems and administrative capacity. Our team of eight Program Support Specialist (PSS) has worked closely with programs since the late fall of 2015 and have recorded some notable accomplishments. These have included: strengthening relationships between school districts, early childhood centers and other organizations providing early childhood services in the communities; supporting grant-funded programs in a community to coordinate recruitment and enrollment; strengthening inclusion practices for children with IEPs; and working with programs to increase enrollment of children in priority populations.

Another notable success is that our Sub-grantees continue to partner with their communities to strengthen existing and develop new and innovative collaborative partnerships that increases access to high-quality programs, support sustainable delivery of services and empowers families with the tools and resources needed to

reach their goals. The Preschool Development Grant has served as a catalyst to bring together stakeholders who share a mission and commitment to serve young children and their families. Several programs reported exciting examples of these successful partnerships in year three:

- In Lansing, staff were experiencing a large amount of significant behaviors exhibited by the students. They built a collaboration with Illinois Action for Children (a non-for-profit organization that has the expertise in providing comprehensive professional development opportunities, resources, and technical assistance to early care and school-age professionals in the community), and are now contracting with Illinois Action for Children for Mental Health consultation, to work with their staff to develop strategies to address the challenging behaviors.
- Lessie Bates Davis Early/Head Start Center built a collaboration with Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville to supply services for health, vision and dental screenings for the children. They have also built a partnership with, the Sorority AKA, that came into the program in recognition of “Dr. Martin Luther King” to clean and sanitize the complete location. This happens on his birthday every year; this event is special to them because it shows the care and support of partners to keep their children safe and their environment clean.
- Mount Vernon had a goal to partner with the community to provide opportunities to expose students to live performances of the arts. The program began partnering with the middle school to provide opportunities for students to listen to an interactive performance by the orchestra this Spring. The program also is partnering with Cedarhurst for the Arts Center to bring a Reggae group to perform in February. The program also partnered with the local museum in December so students could attend a play to be exposed to live performance art.
- In West Chicago they built a new partnership with the Latino Policy Forum. The Sub-grantee partnered with the forum to provide training for parents called Abriendo Puertas (AP). The Sub-grantees staff participated in the training and has now implemented the training for their parents. AP is a 10-week program that parents commit to attending all 10 weeks in which they learn about everything from parenting strategies to being advocates for their children. They have completed the first 10-week session with great success and are looking forward to the next 10-week cohort starting in the spring.
- Multiple programs continue to have success building partnerships with organizations which support specific needs of children and families, including domestic violence shelters, alcohol and drug rehab programs, housing programs, food depositories, and family counseling.

### **Barriers and Lessons Learned**

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

In general, barriers that continue to be experienced by programs, based on Sub-grantee reporting, have clustered in the following areas:

- *Workforce* - Illinois proudly exceeds the minimum teacher qualification requirements for a federally-defined High-Quality Preschool Program, requiring a professional educator license with an early childhood endorsement, above and beyond a Bachelor's degree. Many of our Sub-grantees additionally require teachers with bilingual or special education endorsements. Although Illinois has made great strides in improving our early childhood workforce in recent years, particularly through strategic investments made as a part of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), our expansion has increased the demand for a limited supply of highly-qualified teachers. As of September 2017, early childhood workforce development is one of the projects that the Governor's Cabinet on Children and

Youth chose to address. The project team, led by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, is focused on promoting and supporting a strong pipeline and alignment of career pathways for a diverse, well-qualified early childhood care and education workforce. Illinois continues to address workforce development issues.

- *Social-Emotional Needs* - Illinois' Sub-grantees were successful, as described above, in reaching and enrolling a significant number of the most at-risk children in the state. This success has brought challenges in preparing staff to meet the increased number and more complex needs of these children and families. We are working to address this by identifying opportunities to support social-emotional learning at the state level through capacity building and supports using the Pyramid Model. In December 2017, Illinois was awarded PDG Supplemental Funding to expand our State-wide efforts on implementing the Pyramid Model with our Sub-grantees. Focus will be given to the following elements: build a Master Cadre of Training and Technical Assistance professionals (including Program Support Specialist); provide Pyramid Model Coaches training to implement a cyclical process for supporting teachers use of effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children; and build leadership teams to support program wide implementation of the Pyramid Model to support early childhood educators and programs to implement the structures needed for high-fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model.
- *Absenteeism* - Chronic absenteeism of enrolled children has been a challenge reported from some of our programs. Programs have increased the involvement of family support staff in working with families where attendance is a challenge. As a State, Illinois has taken on the challenge of addressing chronic absenteeism through the creation of the Illinois Attendance Commission. This entity was legislatively created within the Illinois State Board of Education to study absenteeism, beginning in preschool, and make recommendations for data systems, best practices, and potential new initiatives. This systematic approach will empower the State to create a consistent and cohesive plan to directly address irregular attendance of children, including those in the High-Quality Preschool Program. Based on the December 15, 2017 *Executive Summary Report of the Attendance Commission*, the Illinois Attendance Commission has identified, as one of the outcomes, to develop “Mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this state in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans”. This improvement in data systems will enhance efforts to prevent chronic absence and to intervene when chronic absence levels have been reached by individual students. It was also addressed in the December 15, 2017 *Executive Summary Report of the Attendance Commission*, the importance on family engagement to support families who find it difficult to ensure their children's daily participation in programs.

### **Program Adjustments**

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

The most significant change in our project is reflected in our plan for Community Systems Development, described below as Competitive Preference Priority 2. While we began our approach with a structure based around regional boundaries, it was critical in our implementation process to obtain feedback from key stakeholders in communities across the State. This feedback has informed and refined our plan, leading us to approach this work as a comprehensive system of responsive and flexible State supports to communities, centered around five strategies: aligning community outcomes, the community systems development subcommittee, development of policies and practices, promoting clear communication, and training and technical assistance to local communities. Illinois State Board of Education, with support from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, issued a Request for Sealed Proposals for a statewide system of Early Childhood Community Systems Technical Assistance in June 2017. This was an important milestone, as it marked the state's first efforts to launch publicly-funded statewide community systems TA supports that are available to all communities regardless of funding stream. The framework for this proposed system of supports

was built on lessons learned and recommendations from the Innovation Zones, ABL e Change pilot, and other Illinois community systems initiatives, and was further shaped through discussion with ELC Committees. This effort is discussed in detail under Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting the Continuum of Early Learning and Development.



**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. 08/31/2020

Grantee State: IL PR/Award #: s149b150004

**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, 2017.

During our third year of implementation, Illinois successfully served 4,029 eligible children in our high-quality preschool program. This enrollment represents an increase of 2.5% of the total eligible children who are now being served by early education programs in our targeted communities.

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

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

Of the 4,029 children served by the High-Quality Preschool Programs in Illinois, 13.1% were children with special needs who received Part B services; which represents a increase of 23% since implementation in year one. This exceeds the current national percentage of four year-old children receiving Part B services.

Programs were offered continued technical assistance in serving students in a least restrictive environment through regional round-tables. Programs in attendance were given the opportunity to take part in conversations with peers regarding funding, inclusion models, related services, and social-emotional supports. They also heard from a program who began improving their inclusive opportunities the previous year. Targeted programs were given information on using the Inclusive Inquiry Cycle and completed “check-in” points based off of this cycle. For ongoing professional development, a community of practice based on the “Preschool Inclusion Toolbox” is available for programs to participate.

Illinois is still finalizing statewide data for children receiving Part B services for this third implementation year. Implementation year two's data's was use to inform planning of supports offered to communities to ensure

continuous improvement in the number of children with special needs participating in the Preschool Development Grant-funded program. The State will continue to examine best practices from programs with high levels of success in serving a significant and robust population of children with special needs.

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

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

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

In the third year of implementation, programs evaluated outreach and enrollment strategies and made changes to their plans when needed. Lessons learned from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Innovation Zone project around outreach and collaboration continue to be utilized to assist programs in developing effective strategies in their community. For example, a Sub-grantee collaborated with their Township. They attend meetings to discuss resources that are available to the community, i.e. clerk's department, food depository, rental assistance, community nutrition, senior services, family and individual counseling. As a result, parents are aware and able to access services that are offered by the township. The partnership also allows the school to be visible in the community and connect with parents who have children who will benefit from the program, therefore maximizing their outreach efforts for enrollment of priority populations.

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

In addition, the State's regional McKinney-Vento liaisons continue to engage with administrators to provide support in conducting innovative outreach to families experiencing homelessness and to support programs in meeting their needs once enrolled.

Illinois' demographic data from the current program year indicates progress in serving higher numbers of eligible children, as well as opportunities for continued improvement in year three.

By serving 4,029 children in our High-Quality Preschool Program in year three, the State has increased the percentage of eligible four-year-old children served by 2.5% since last year, and overall a 30% increase since year one. In addition, significant numbers of the children served by the program are from the State's identified priority areas, designed to ensure recruitment of the most at-risk children and families. Of the children served in the third year, 5% were children experiencing homelessness, 4.3% were children involved in the child welfare system, 39.5% were from families below 50% of the federal poverty limits and 13.1% were children with IEPs.

**1(b) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children served overall in the State Preschool Program.** Please describe any increases or decreases in this GPRA measure based on fall enrollment in the State Preschool Program for the 2017-18 school year.

As of December 2017, the number of four-year-olds served by the state preschool program was 40,461, which is 24.3% of eligible children. Sub-grantees in the targeted communities have served 4,029 four-year-old children, an increase of 919 children over year one enrollment. This significant increase was supported by Illinois' investment in the Early Childhood Block Grant of an additional \$75 million in fiscal year 2017 and \$50 million in fiscal year 2018, in support of our matching funds commitment for the Preschool Development Grant. Chicago Public Schools received 37% or \$18,500,00 of the additional funding.

**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 3 APR, grantees will provide disaggregated data on the school readiness of the children enrolled and served by the grant. This may include information collected about the children enrolled and received services by the grant during the 2016-17 preschool year. States may provide data from a sample of children (e.g., a sample being used for any evaluation).*

In the Year 3 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.

In alignment with one of ISBE's Board Goals, Illinois has mandated that every kindergarten student in a public school setting must be assessed for school readiness, beginning in school year 2017-2018. Illinois' tool for measuring school readiness is the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), an observational assessment completed by each child's teacher upon enrollment in kindergarten. The full KIDS instrument examines children's development on 55 Measures across the five Essential Domains of School Readiness and is comprised of eleven total domains. Domains included in the comprehensive KIDS Tool are: Self-Regulation; Social and Emotional Development; Language and Literacy Development; Cognition: Math; Cognition: Science; Physical Development; Health; History - Social Science; Visual and Performing Arts; English Language Development (ELD); and Language and Literacy Development in Spanish (SLD). KIDS is based on developmental research and theory, includes developmental sequences of behaviors along a continuum, and spans the development trajectories of children in kindergarten. KIDS is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS), which establishes Illinois' expectations for what children should know and be able to do upon kindergarten entry.

Illinois implemented the initial pilot phase of KIDS during the 2012-13 school year and continued with phased implementation until fall 2017, when KIDS was mandated for kindergarten. The state provided districts with the

KIDS instrument, as well as all KIDS trainings, materials, coaches and support and resources at no cost. Teachers implementing KIDS attended a one or two-day training to learn how to gather evidence for and complete the assessment, use the results to inform planning curriculum, and share results with parents. Administrators were also invited to attend the full training, or attend a half-day training specifically for administrators. Once teachers attended the training, further support was offered through regional coaches, resources were provided through <https://www.isbe.net/kids> and separate trainings for additional staff members were offered. As of January 2018, 98.94% of all districts that provide kindergarten were trained on KIDS, which includes 753 of the 761 districts with kindergarten classrooms. This includes all districts receiving Preschool Development Grant funds. In terms of staff training, 8,541 kindergarten teachers and 2,283 administrators and other personnel attended KIDS training sessions.

School district feedback was collected through surveys, focus groups, and from program coaches since the implementation of the KIDS pilot. This feedback was utilized to form the assessment process that will be used by the state going forward, as well as to customize, restructure and simplify the KIDS instrument, training and implementation process for the first mandated data collection period in fall 2017. Based on feedback from districts during the five-year pilot phase, the decision for the state mandate beginning in fall 2017-18 was that districts report on fourteen measures taken from four out of five of the readiness domains. In addition, the decision was to utilize only the first of three data collection periods for the state purpose of determining kindergarten readiness. Ratings were mandated at the 40th day of kindergarten enrollment for all students attending district kindergarten classrooms. The KIDS 14 State Readiness Measures provide common indicators that can be used in all districts throughout Illinois, with the primary value of providing common assessment of children's readiness for kindergarten, collected via the same rubric for all kindergarten children across the state. Looking at trends across the state within a given year, as well as how the trends change across years, will help the ISBE understand where children, schools, and districts may benefit from additional support in specific areas of development. Although the state is only mandating the 14 Measures, the comprehensive KIDS instrument and the three data collection periods continue to be available for districts to use at their discretion, to measure student progress throughout the year.

One additional learning opportunity in this initial year of statewide implementation was the inaugural “Mastering KIDS Summit”, which was held on December 13 & 14, 2017 and drew nearly 300 educators from across Illinois, including administrators, principals, kindergarten teachers and other district staff. Participants attended workshops on a range of topics, including Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Using Data to Improve Student Outcomes, Building More Effective Statewide Education Systems for Using Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and Sharing Best Practices. Attendees also joined in conversations about how to ensure that every child in Illinois arrives to kindergarten ready to thrive.

The mandated data collection period was initially scheduled to close in mid-December, but due to a range of issues with uploading data from the larger school districts, some teachers were allowed KIDStech access to enter ratings until January 15. To clarify, teachers were not given additional time to gather evidence or assign student ratings, but only given additional time for the purpose of entering previously-assigned ratings based on information gathered during the first 40 days of student attendance. This extension ensured as complete a data set as possible, without sacrificing consistency and integrity of data. In all, a total of 125,800 kindergarten students attending 1,876 schools and 745 identified districts across the state were assessed by 6,276 teachers using the KIDS Instrument.

As of February 2018, ISBE will be able to use data matching to identify students previously enrolled in Preschool Development Grant funded programs across the state for those students assessed using the KIDS Instrument in the fall of 2017.

ISBE is currently working with our contractor to define “kindergarten readiness” and apply that calculation to the scores received for all the children assessed using KIDS. That determination will be applied using previous KIDS ‘criterion-zone boundaries’ psychometrics for readiness. The purpose of this process is to define regions along the scales of measurement of the various KIDS domains that are associated with children meeting Illinois standards of readiness, at the end of kindergarten. This is to address the question of how KIDS’ results relate to standards-based expectations for children's readiness at the beginning of kindergarten. The finalized data and materials are anticipated to be ready by spring of 2018, but are not currently available for inclusion at the time of

this report.

**For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:**

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

N/A

## Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

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

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

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

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

During year three of implementation, Illinois continues to make strategic funding investments in several infrastructure areas to support quality. These initiatives align closely with the State's plan as indicated in the application for initial funding.

#### **Program Support**

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

Incorporated within this project are two primary components: 1) a Program Support Specialist assigned to each program to assist administrators in building strong systems to support quality and; 2) resource materials specifically addressing the needs of our Preschool Expansion programs and the development of training opportunities.

#### **Compliance Monitoring**

The State's existing monitoring contract with National Louis University's McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) was expanded to provide compliance monitoring of programs using an expanded Compliance Checklist (detailed in the next section) and classroom environment quality monitoring using the Environment Rating Scale. During this third year of implementation, Illinois transitioned from using ECERS- R to ECERS -3. The use of this updated tool will support programs in strengthening teacher interactions and overall continuous quality improvement.

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

#### **Supports for Excellence in Inclusive Practice**

In addition, the State expanded a partnership with Early Choices, an initiative of the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County, which provides professional development and technical assistance to early childhood programs on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments. This collaboration supports technical assistance, including the use of the Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP), a new tool used to assess quality indicators applicable to all children, helping to increase the standards of early childhood programs and assist all children in achieving success. Early Choices works directly with programs to increase their capacity for serving all children, as well as to promote the program's continued quality improvement. Through training and coaching, programs engage with staff to increase knowledge of best practices and work toward implementation of those

practices. This process includes systems integration, including recruitment, to ensure that programs are equipped to reach and serve children with special needs.

The Award of Excellence for Inclusion is being transformed to the Outstanding Practices in Inclusion award, which is being administered by Early CHOICES and the Early Childhood LRE Stakeholders Consortium. Programs must meet pre-qualification data, create a 30-minute presentation that highlights program and classroom practices using the Illinois Inclusion Guidelines and submit the presentation to a committee in person or via online format. Programs will also have a qualified assessor visit to complete the Inclusive Classroom Profile. Programs receiving the award will be publicly recognized at the Illinois Sharing a Vision conference.

### **Birth to Third Grade Continuum**

The State partnered with Illinois State University (ISU) to establish a comprehensive system of supports for the birth to third grade alignment component of the project. This project launched in spring 2015 with an open invitation for PDG communities to apply as participants in our inaugural B-3 cohort. Seven communities - Rockford, Dolton, Metro East, McLean County, Elgin, North Chicago and Chicago - were selected and participated in an initial summer institute to begin developing a work plan for the next two years to move towards ambitious and achievable B-3 alignment goals. In 2017, a summer conference was offered to all PDG communities as well as state funded communities who are beginning to implement the preschool expansion model. Each community collaborated to develop a work plan to establish B-3 alignment goals.

ISU hired a B-3 Continuity Director in the last quarter of 2015 to lead these efforts moving forward. The director's prior experience in guiding local alignment efforts between an early learning system and a charter elementary school system will support the needs of Illinois communities as they continue working toward further successful alignment. In 2016 this work took more of a team approach to support the thirteen communities. The team consists of four members with a variety of skill sets and various levels of expertise in areas including, community systems development, K-3 classrooms, professional development, Early Childhood experience and research, and state policy experience. The members work closely together to assess individual community alignment progress and determine what additional supports can be provided to move the alignment work forward. To promote B-3 strategies across the state during the year, the B-3 Continuity Director serves on or participates with several different statewide committees; including the P-20 Networks B-3 team, the State of Illinois Kindergarten Transitions Committee, the State of Illinois Community Systems Development-Sub Committee, and the Illinois Early Learning Council. In addition to presenting at several conferences, members of the B-3 leadership team also attended relevant conferences throughout the year.

As a part of Illinois' system of State supports to communities, the birth to third grade alignment project is designed to provide individualized support to communities in meeting their specific needs and goals. Beyond the conferences described above, communities have received individual site visits from the team.

These visits have three primary goals:

- Assisting communities in identifying stakeholders to be a part of their B-3 team.
- Learning more about the existing collaborations in the community and determining whether one of these collaborations is an appropriate "home" for the B-3 community work.
- Supporting communities in assessing current alignment efforts and progress, identifying primary areas of need, and establishing a plan to move forward.

With these site visits completed, communities will receive continued support from the State in the form of technical assistance, access to relevant resources, regional meetings, support facilitating community meetings, connection to national experts, webinars on B-3 alignment components and peer exchanges.

Other forms of support will be provided as needed to the extent that resources will permit. Illinois State Board of Education, ISU and Office of Early Childhood Development are committed to ensuring that communities are successful in implementing significant and sustainable alignment activities in one of Illinois' eight core elements for B-3 alignment:

- 1. Family engagement:** schools and engaged families partner in children's formal education, including activities such as school-parent communication regarding programs, services and supports available at the school, students' progress, and parent involvement in school decision-making and school- community collaborations;
- 2. Transitions:** increased access to early childhood programs and smooth transitions between programs and grades that focus on the continuum provided to each child and sustain gains into the early grades;
- 3. Data-driven improvement:** using meaningful child-based assessments and program data to drive instruction,

identify achievement gaps, allocate resources, and determine areas for professional development;

**4. Professional development:** to ensure that teaching staff are highly-effective and that professional development opportunities are aligned from birth through third grade, as well as grounded in child development theory and effective instructional practices;

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

**6. Assessments:** sharing assessment practices and data across the full early childhood continuum (Birth to Third grade) with particular focus on the implementation of the KIDS

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

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

*See section 4 -Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum, for examples of this work.*

#### **State-Level Staff**

The Preschool Development Grant is managed through the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development , which also manages the MIECHV and RTT-ELC grants. In Spring 2015, OECD hired the Preschool Expansion Policy Implementation Director to manage implementation and federal grant compliance and to support the State's strategy to use the Preschool Development Grant as a catalyst to strengthen the ability of the state-funded preschool program to support the most at-risk young learners. That individual worked in close collaboration with staff at the Illinois State Board of Education, fiscal agent for the PDG grant and administrator of the Early Childhood Block Grant, which funds Preschool for All programs. The position of Preschool Expansion Policy Implementation Director was open for a period; as of September 2017, this position is occupied.

The position of Community Systems Policy Director at the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development was also filled in September 2017. The Community Systems Policy Director coordinates state, local funding and initiatives supporting early childhood community collaborations and systems development. While this role was previously funded through RTT-ELC, with the expiry of those funds, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development formed an agreement to move the position under the Preschool Development Grant-Expansion Grant.

Additionally, the position of Illinois Pyramid Model Implementation Director was filled in September 2017. This new role was developed to expand supports around the Pyramid Model. Illinois recognized the need for a position to oversee efforts of implementing the Pyramid Model framework into PDG - funded programs, since PDG Sub-grantees continue to express the need for additional social and emotional supports to address the challenges staff face in meeting the increased number of children who face more complex social and emotional needs. In December 2017, Illinois was awarded PDG Supplemental Funding to expand our state-wide effort on implementing the Pyramid Model with our Sub -grantees, which will be coordinated by the Illinois Pyramid Model Implementation Director.

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

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

- High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;
- High-quality professional development for all staff;
- A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications;
- A Full-Day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- Evidence-based health and safety standards.

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

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

In order to meet all twelve elements, Illinois established an addendum to its PFA compliance checklist with twenty additional items, which clearly define the requirements for Illinois' Preschool Development Grant-funded programs to comply with the expectations of High-Quality Preschool Programs. Each program's contract requires compliance with all twelve structural elements. For the purpose of program evaluation, evidence of compliance was measured during comprehensive monitoring visits, which took place in the Spring of 2017. Programs developed continuous quality improvement plans to address any areas of non-compliance. Our focus in designing this compliance system, as well as the supports offered to programs, is on administrative capacity and the development of sustainable, written policies and procedures within programs. Coaching is provided to programs in need of support through the process of continuous program improvement.

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

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

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

Programs received sample job descriptions to support their understanding of the parent educator and instructional leader staff roles. These descriptions included key activities that are expected of each role to support program compliance and quality. In addition, professional development activities at a state level have targeted each role.

A partnership between the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership empowered instructional leaders through a professional development project called Lead, Learn, Excel. This 16-month process supported instructional leaders in building the systems and structures within their programs to transfer knowledge to practice by implementing sustainable, job-embedded professional learning routines with their teachers. Leaders from Preschool Development Grant-funded programs took part in this program and have been implementing strategies learned, including conducting professional learning community

meetings, group lesson planning and data dialogue to help strengthen instructional practices. In 2017, The Early Childhood Center for Professional Learning subcontracted The Ounce of Prevention to provide two Leader Learning Exchanges in two different regions for a total of four Exchanges for Instructional Leaders. The meetings were held from 10:00 - 3:00pm. The goal for the first day (January 18, 2017 and January 26, 2017) was to examine the role of the instructional leader as the driver of change; learn, review and share strategies used to explore, install and implement job-embedded professional learning and development and connect the PDG - Expansion requirements to the tools for instructional leadership. The goal of the second day (March 7, 2017 and March 9, 2017) was continuing support for instructional leaders with strategies for the work of teaching and learning in an early childhood setting; identifying how the relationship for learning established by the instructional leader enhanced the learning opportunities in preschool expansion grant school communities, and discussions for improving instructional leadership and the organizational conditions in which teaching occurs.

Parent educators received targeted professional development workshops offered by The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning on topics which included engaging parents in preschools and communities and helping families address challenging behaviors. Parent educators and Instructional Leaders also have access to The Early Childhood Professional Learning Workbench; this is a special section of the Early Childhood Professional Learning (ECPL) website, dedicated to supporting roles in the successful implementation of the expansion grant within a framework of continuous quality improvement. Through monitored forums, Instructional Leaders and Family Support Specialists/Parent Educators can connect on-line with fellow practitioners to ask questions and exchange ideas that promote best practices. In addition to the forums there are resources and information about upcoming professional learning opportunities, all targeted to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

Illinois is implementing the Pyramid Model framework, strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional development, to help the PDG programs implement and sustain the use of evidence-based approaches that support the learning and engagement of all children. Focus will be given to the following elements: build a Master Cadre of Training and Technical Assistance professionals (including Program Support Specialist); provide Pyramid Model Coaches training to implement a cyclical process for supporting teachers use of effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children; and building leadership teams to support program wide implementation of the Pyramid Model to support early childhood educators and programs to implement the structures needed for high-fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model.

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

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

### **Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA**

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

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

In our initial application, the State projected an average cost of \$8,200 per new slot and \$4,400 per new slot enhanced by Head Start. These costs average to a \$6,300 per slot cost for all new slots, which is slightly higher than our actual average cost per slot of \$6,021. This average was determined by prorating costs based on the number of each type of slot that was created. In addition, the State projected an average cost of \$5,100 per slot

for enhancement of state-funded Preschool for All slots.

Our actual costs per slot for this enhancement were \$5,224 per slot. These costs are within a reasonable margin of our initial projections.

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

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

Illinois is committed to a collaborative program model that relies upon a strong foundation of relationships between the State and our Sub-grantees and between those Sub-grantees and their communities. During the third year of implementation of the Preschool Development Grant, the State continued to invest key resources to support this model in each Sub-grantee program and community. A publicly-accessible website, housed by the Illinois State Board of Education, provides instant access to resources, policies and guidance for program administrators and staff.

<https://www.isbe.net/Pges/Preschool-Development-Grant-Expansion-Grant.aspx>.

A key part of this strategy is professional development and technical assistance to programs towards the goal of supporting development of administrative capacity and strong program systems for compliance and quality.

Through a partnership with the Early Childhood Center for Professional Development (ECCPD), housed at The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, Illinois established a program support initiative consisting of two components: program support specialists assigned to Sub-grantees and targeted professional development supports for program administrators.

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

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

After intensive training on the State's goals and plan, the twelve elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs and the State's specific requirements for compliance and quality, these specialists were assigned to a caseload of approximately five Sub-grantees each. Specialists meet regularly with the administrative team of each Sub-grantee - generally consisting of a program administrator or principal, the instructional leader and the parent educator.

All specialists conducted regular visits to each Sub-grantee. Through these intentional site visits specialists continue to provide intentional in-person and virtual follow-up, supporting programs in resolving recruitment challenges, developing systems for assessing and meeting the needs of families, sustainability efforts, helping programs connect to community resources and meeting other individual programmatic needs. Following monitoring visits, specialists worked with programs to develop continuous quality improvement plans. Specialists regularly communicate with staff from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development to share concerns identified in the field, closing the feedback loop and ensuring that state-level administrators developed guidance and offered resources to address current needs.

In addition, specialist contact with programs has informed the second path of support offered by the State in conjunction with ECCPD. ECCPD provided targeted professional development offerings and relevant resources, specifically targeted around instructional leadership, family engagement, and supports in the area of comprehensive services, trauma and challenging behavior. Feedback from specialists directly impacted the development of these offerings.

Professional development workshops continued to be offered, focusing on the Parent Educators role in utilizing comprehensive services in supporting children and families, as well as family engagement webinars and in person trainings. ECCPD has developed an on-line portal, The Early Childhood Professional Learning Workbench, where Parent Educators can engage in a community of practice for support and sharing of ideas. The Early Childhood Professional Learning Workbench is a special section of the Early Childhood Professional Learning (ECPL) website, dedicated to supporting roles in the successful implementation of the expansion grant within a framework of continuous quality improvement. Through monitored forums, Instructional Leaders and Family Support Specialists/Parent Educators can connect on-line with fellow practitioners to ask questions and exchange ideas that promote best practices. In addition to the forums there are resources and information about upcoming professional learning opportunities, all targeted to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

### **Support for Community Collaboration**

The State has developed guidance materials and templates to support our Sub-grantees in developing and maintaining strong partnerships. Sample templates for memoranda of understanding between PDG Sub-grantees and health providers, family strengthening organizations, social service agencies and other key community partners have served as a foundation for active, two-way referral systems and collaborative relationships. In addition, the State has provided support to PDG Sub-grantees that have elected to subcontract with community- based early learning providers. To ensure consistency of program delivery across settings, we have directed Sub- grantees to develop systems and procedures that function across sites and settings and are unified at the program level, rather than individual to each site. Guidance to programs supports these entities in developing clear, written agreements with community-based subcontractors and establishing intentional plans for monitoring of compliance and quality.

Program Support Specialists worked with programs to strengthen their community collaborations. Some successful examples include:

- A PSS worked with a program administrator to find and build partnerships within their community to provide wrap-around services for the families in need.
- A PSS worked with a program administrator to build a partnership between a PDG Sub-grantee and childcare providers to increase screenings for children and families by collaboratively providing screenings at community locations (e.g library, local food depository) to support the recruitment of students.
- Other programs have partnered with community service organizations to help families in finding housing and employment, enrolling in higher education, and obtaining winter clothing and food resources.

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

### **Engagement with State Systems**

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

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

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

The State has partnered with Illinois State University (ISU) to implement our plan to support community-level coordination and alignment of systems and services for children and families from birth to third grade. This work began with seven communities - Rockford, Dolton, Metro East, McLean County, Elgin, North Chicago and Chicago - taking part in a summer institute in mid-June of 2015. In June of 2017 all seven of the original communities, as well as six added in 2016 - Aurora, Carpentersville, Decatur, Riverdale, West Chicago and Wheaton/ Warrenville - attended a third summer conference. Our work continues to be focused in three key areas:

##### **Establishment of a State-Level Team**

A team has been utilized to plan and implement a clear strategy in support of Illinois' goals, as indicated in our proposal. This team convenes on a regular basis to assess progress and plan next steps.

##### **Summer Conferences**

During June 2017, the conference was offered to all PDG communities as well as state funded communities who are beginning to implement the preschool expansion model.

This Institute had three primary goals:

- Support and expand knowledge of developmentally appropriate educational practices across the Birth through Third Grade continuum with a focus on developmentally appropriate practices.
- Enhance early childhood educators' and community members' understanding of the structure and culture of elementary schools and enhance elementary school educators' understanding of the structure and culture of early childhood education and community support systems by increasing alignment within and across communities and school districts to best support children and families. Various presenters and panels provided information about transitioning through the programs and agencies.
- Assist participants with understanding state efforts to define and support the local creation of coherent local pathways from prekindergarten programs into the early elementary grades in their communities.

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

##### **Supports for Community Planning**

For the 2017 year, the state-level team continues to provide supports to communities to assist them in developing local stakeholder groups to lead this work and begin prioritizing goals and tasks. Communities were encouraged to look broadly at their existing collaborations and systems and identify potential stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to B-3 alignment at the community level, engaging the school district, community-based and private early learning centers, Head Start grantees, social service agencies, philanthropy groups and other key entities. A suggested group of stakeholders included:

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

Follow - up monthly check-ins are conducted, either in person or by phone and email continued through the 2017 year, with a focus on learning about existing community alignment initiatives, confirming a stakeholder team and moving towards establishing concrete community goals as steps in developing an alignment plans with all of participants. The team continues to build on existing goals and alignment with existing groups and collaborations as districts work to make smooth pathways from birth through the early elementary years. Some examples of the teams work for 2017 include:

- Example job descriptions and needed credentials were researched for District 300, as they worked to hire a social-emotional specialist.
- Connections were established between North Chicago School District 187 and Elgin School District U-46. This partnership allowed for some peer mentoring around the implementation of play-based curriculum which U-46 had already implemented and North Chicago was interested in implementing.
- Additionally, the partnership between North Chicago and Elgin led to an in-person `think-tank' day about play-based instruction. Consultants were used to facilitate this training and five different PDG communities gathered to learn together.
- Throughout the year, facilitation services were provided to the City of Chicago to develop an action plan for serving families with young children. The Mayor's office brought together officials from eleven different city agencies to form the Early Learning Interagency Taskforce (ELIT). The B-3 Director provided monthly facilitation services to help the group identify common goals between each of the agencies for serving young children and their families. Through this work ELIT developed brochure of resources specifically for young children, formalized an action plan, and started to see new partnerships develop between different city agencies.

## 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 3 Target* differs from the *Year 3 Actual*.

Illinois continues to prioritize early education as a critical investment. The education budget for FY2016 included a \$25 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports Illinois' state-funded Preschool for All and birth to three Prevention Initiative programs. Of this increase, \$332,922 supported the PDG-funded program, meeting the State's commitment for this competitive preference priority. The education budget for FY2017 included a \$75 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant. Of this increase, \$17,616,121 supported the non-Federal matching funds used in accordance with the approved the State plan. The education budget for FY2018 included a \$50 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant. Of this increase, \$28,677,576 supported the non-Federal matching used in accordance with the approved State plan to increase the number of PDG-model slots available to Illinois' most at-risk young children. These funds were made available to programs through a second round of a competitive RFP process and programs were scheduled to begin serving students in February 2018. All new PDG-implementing Sub-grantees identified through that process received resources and supports for planning and implementation to ensure compliance and quality. In addition, our sub-grantees have actively enlisted strong support from their local communities to support their programs this year. As a result of these investments, the State is on track with our credible plan for supporting our plan through non-Federal matching funds.

### **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.

Illinois' ambitious Community Systems State Plan was developed in 2014, and feedback was collected through a series of Community Systems Development Listening Sessions in 2015. Facilitated by the BUILD Initiative, a group of state-level community systems administrators created recommendations in 2016 to develop the investments currently underway by the state service delivery system, build on emerging opportunities led by the Governor and state agency heads, address how resources could best support ongoing system development from successes and lessons learned, and foster continued stakeholder buy-in on behalf of the children and families they serve.

These recommendations were reviewed by the Early Learning Council's Community Systems Development Subcommittee, were shared with the Inter Agency Team (IAT) and the state has made significant progress in several areas. The recommendations fall into five categories listed below along with progress to date:

A. At the state level, align community outcomes with goals and indicators being developed through Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth and with the Early Learning Council's (ELC) Dashboard to develop shared understanding.

In 2016, the IAT approved a cross-agency Early Childhood Working Framework for cross- system outcomes, infrastructure, and goals. Accompanying cross-agency shared data indicators have been drafted. Illinois

continues to make progress towards meaningful measurement of these indicators. For example, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System reached a milestone in Spring 2017 and successfully matched student-level data from the School Board of Education with enrollment information from the Child Care Assistance Program database. Upcoming plans to improve cross-systems data coordination include the development of a community-level data usage toolkit to support local organizations and service providers in incorporating both state and local data into planning and resource allocation.

B. At the ELC, consider ways the Community Systems Development Subcommittee (CSDS) could serve as the consistent channel for communication with the field, the state's early childhood Intergovernmental Agency Team (IAT) and the ELC.

Several of the sites that participated in the Innovation Zones created under Race to the Top --Early Learning Challenge piloted a feedback loop mechanism that allowed community collaborations and state and local policy makers to better communicate obstacles to implementation and systemic challenges. Since the end of the implementation period for the Innovation Zones, the Community Systems Development Subcommittee of the Early Learning Council, the Intergovernmental Agency Team, the Early Learning Council, and other stakeholders have been exploring ways to integrate the feedback loop mechanism into larger state-level infrastructure.

To that end, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development successfully applied for Preschool Development Grant/Expansion Grant supplemental funding towards the end of 2017, and one of the projects that will be funded is the creation of a Community Systems Portal (CSP) website. CSP will house a discussion forum for community collaborations, a part of which will include functionality for the feedback loop. The planning for the Portal is underway with input from private partners, the CSDS, and other stakeholders.

C. At the IAT level, foster the development of policies and practices that support increased enrollment of the shared priority populations in the continuum of early childhood opportunities. This includes but is not limited to prenatal, home visiting, and early care and education up to age eight, all to help them become safe, healthy, eager to succeed, and ready to learn when they begin kindergarten.

In addition to the aforementioned project to develop a Community Systems Portal website, the state will also use PDG-EG supplemental funding to implement a demonstration project to provide racial equity training to center-based childcare leadership staff, adapting existing resources on racial equity in early childhood settings to reflect the responsibilities of program administrators. While the contracted vendor will develop the details of these trainings, content must cover the topics of 1) hiring and staff development, 2) outreach and enrollment, and 3) curriculum and programming from the perspective of promoting racially equitable practices.

The Illinois State Board of Education included a number of community systems components and supports in its RFP process for the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), which was new competitions for preschool expansion model programs in Illinois FY18. These changes in the ECBG represent a positive shift towards increasing access for priority populations in outreach and enrollment protocols, priorities, and program models. Criteria for the application specifically included requirements to enumerate vertical and horizontal alignment of systems to improve access to high quality services for disadvantaged populations.

At the recommendation of several workgroups and subcommittees of the ELC, Illinois State Board of Education provided a number of resources to support communities in preparing for the re-competition opportunity, including a website of cross-systems resource links, webinars, and online toolkits. Additionally, independent contractors were engaged to provide training and technical assistance both in group settings and individually, with specific sessions on how to build collaborations to strengthen supports across the birth-to-three continuum.

D. Form agreements among the IAT, the ELC and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development to develop and promote clear messages from all funders, programs, and sectors.

The past year has been a time of transition and re-organization for the ELC and IAT, and as the RTT-ELC funding period drew to an end, the roles and responsibilities of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood

Development and private partners were also being examined. The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development saw new team members assume the Preschool Expansion Policy Implementation Director and Community Systems Policy Director positions, and this change in personnel coincided with new leadership for the ELC Community Systems Development subcommittee. With this turnover in personnel, there is renewed commitment to develop clear narratives that can be effective in communicating the complexity of early childhood to audiences that are unfamiliar with the entire system. The team plans to build upon the momentum in the field to promote a deeper understanding of the comprehensive nature of early childhood services.

E. At the IAT level, determine ways to provide training and technical assistance to local communities that choose to move forward toward community systems development to achieve collective impact and continue the current momentum and success. Consider which tasks would best be performed by a subcontractor.

Adopting this core recommendation, Illinois State Board of Education, with support from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, issued a Request For Sealed Proposals for a statewide system of Early Childhood Community Systems Technical Assistance in June 2017. This was an important milestone, as it marked the state's first efforts to launch publicly-funded statewide community systems TA supports available to all communities regardless of funding stream. The framework for this proposed system of supports was built on lessons learned and recommendations from the Innovation Zones, ABLe Change pilot, and other Illinois community systems initiatives, and was further shaped through discussion with ELC Committees. Innovation Zone observations included:

1. Training alone is not sufficient to impart skills; job-embedded professional development, coaching, networked peer learning and technical assistance (including around data collection and systems) are also needed to strengthen community capacity to achieve the state's vision for young children.
2. Expertise in community systems is reinforced with systems change in institutions, and in organizational practice. Changes in practice - use of data in planning, small experiments, action learning cycles - can lead to increased efficiency of resources as system processes become embedded in the institution.
3. Successful attainment of outcomes takes time; capacity building should consider the time it takes to build relationships, establish community systems, and test and capture results from small experiments, allowing 4-6 months for a community to gain fluency in a new learning model.
4. The skillset required of a community based collaboration leader has evolved. Strong facilitation skills, confidence, and supervision to support periods of reflection are essential elements. Collaboration leaders should have access to high quality, executive level professional development, along with strong support from a supervisor, in alignment with the state's vision. Requirements that explicitly state this organizational support will further successful implementation.

ISBE made an award to a vendor in December 2017, and contract and implementation planning processes are currently underway

### **Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High Quality State Preschool Slots (if included in the State's approved application).**

Describe progress made in using at least 50% of the State's federal grant award to create new State Preschool Program slots that will increase the overall number of new slots in State Preschool Programs that meet the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

In year one, Illinois budgeted approximately 94% of the State's federal grant award to support 3,110 new and expanded High Quality State Preschool slots. Of these, 2,559 new slots were created, representing 82% of all supported slots. Based on our cost model for the Preschool Development Grant, new slots are budgeted at an approximately 60% higher cost than expanded slots. In year two, Illinois budgeted approximately 91% of the State's federal grant award to support 3,934 new and expanded High Quality State Preschool slots. Of these, 3,497 new slots were created, representing 89% of all supported slots. Illinois has met and substantially exceeded the requirements of this priority item. In year three, Illinois budgeted approximately 99.9% of the State's federal grant award to support 4,029 new and expanded High Quality State Preschool slots. Of these, 3,685 new slots

were created, representing 91% of all supported slots. A budget amendment was submitted to reallocate money not spent to the Sub-grantee line item.

Slots were targeted to communities across the State with a significant gap between the number of high-quality preschool slots available and the number of 4-year old children living in poverty. Data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, which comprehensively tracks child population and early learning enrollment, was used to select from applicant communities. The State's goal is to target early learning resources to the most at-risk children and families, providing the biggest lever to increasing school readiness.

## Section B: Budget Information

### Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

1. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.

A revised State-level budget will be submitted which reflects changes in the state's expenditure of funds, as well as a plan for future expenditures. Funds not expended or obligated have been carried over in two areas:

- *Technical Assistance* - We are carrying unexpended funds from this line into 2018 in order to continue to support high quality programing with identified and anticipated technical assistance.
- *State-Level Infrastructure* - In our initial application, Illinois projected hiring dates for early 2015 for state-level personnel. These positions remained vacant for some time and have now been filled. We will be moving forward unexpended funds into 2018 in order to fund staff members that will be providing programmatic support.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018).

In the revised state-level budget, Illinois will propose adjustments that reflect changes in allocations and adjustments in state-level infrastructure costs. As noted above, some infrastructure costs have been adjusted to reflect changes in funding for personnel and technical assistance.

3. Describe the State's progress on its plan for sustainability at the end of the grant period to ensure that the number and percentage of Eligible Children with access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded, including to additional High-Need Communities.

In our application, Illinois committed to an ambitious plan for increased funding for our state's Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports our state-funded preschool programs. For state fiscal year 2017, the Illinois State Board of Education received an increase of \$75 million for the Early Childhood Block Grant. In state fiscal year 2018, the Illinois State Board of Education received an increase of \$50 million for the Early Childhood Block Grant. Except for the statutory set-aside of funds to Chicago Public Schools, the Illinois State Board of Education will re-compete Early Childhood Block Grant funding during fiscal year 2018, with funding beginning with fiscal year 2019. This re-competition will present an opportunity for high-need communities across the state to increase the number of children enrolled in High-Quality Preschool Programs.

4. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies, if any, between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.

Any unexpended funds from year 3 will be rolled over to federal fiscal year 2018 and re-obligated to Sub-recipients to directly support funded slots.