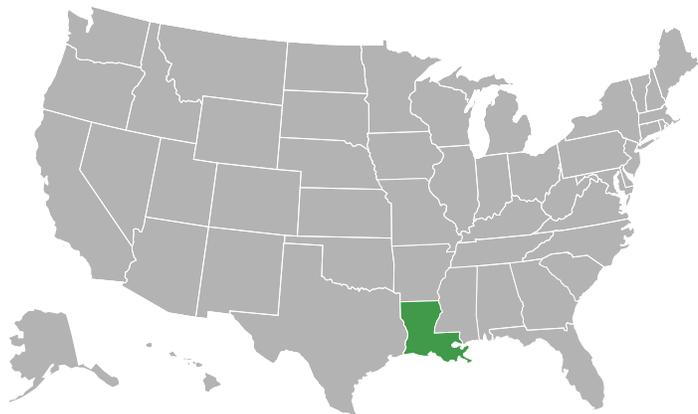


# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

## FY2017 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

### Louisiana



Preschool Development Grants

AUGUST 2018



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

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

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

## General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419B150035 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Project Title: Preschool Expansion Grant

4. Grantee Name: Louisiana Department of Education

5. Grantee Address: 1201 North Third Street

City: Baton Rouge State: Louisiana Zip: 70802

6. Project Director Name: Jenna Conway

Title: Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood

Phone #: (225) 342-3736 Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: jenna.conway@la.gov

## Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2017 To: 12/31/2017

## 8. Budget Expenditures (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

Budget Period	Federal Grant Funds	Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share)
a. Previous Budget Period		
b. Current Budget Period		
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

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

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant?  Yes  No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government?  Yes  No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:
- Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_
- Approving Federal agency:  ED  Other Specify other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only)  Provisional  Final  Other Specify other: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:
- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

## 10. Performance Measures Status

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



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

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

Grantee State: LA

PR/Award #: S419B150035

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.

Louisiana believes promoting quality schooling starts with fostering an environment in which quality thrives: high expectations for children's achievement and progress; families who are able to choose the option best suited for their children; and knowledgeable, skilled teachers who continue to learn and grow throughout their careers. These conditions are the hallmark of Louisiana's premier pre-K programs.

With the state's continuation of the PreK Expansion Grants, Louisiana is making great progress in ensuring not only that new seats are provided, but that they are offered in a way that assures both quality and access for the most high-need communities. Seats funded through this grant play a role in the broader birth to five community network, both through the offering of these seats in diverse providers, and the improvement strategies local community networks have implemented.

## **PreK Expansion Grant**

In the third year of the grant, sixteen diverse communities across the state of Louisiana were funded to enroll 1,440 at-risk children in traditional and mixed delivery settings. At-risk children are defined as children in families with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, with disabilities, in foster care, who are English language learners, and/or experiencing homelessness. The twelve subgrantees from Year 2 were joined by four new subgrantees for Year 3, and represent both rural and urban communities, now covering areas across the entire state: Caddo, Calcasieu, City of Monroe (Ouachita), Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lincoln, Orleans, Plaquemines, Rapides, St. John, Tangipahoa and Union. While these 1,440 grant-funded seats were offered in child care centers in partnership with local school districts or charter schools, more communities offered seats in their local head start. These options provided more opportunities to support parent choice of high-quality pre-K programs. Additionally, over 2,029 children accessed seats in classrooms that were improved through job-embedded coaching, access to comprehensive services, and other improvements aligned with the state's quality rating and improvement system.

## **Year 3 Impact for Children and Families**

The PreK Expansion Grant expanded access to high-quality pre-K programs for families of 1,440 children in sixteen high-need communities. These seats meet the high-quality requirements of LA 4 and NSECD, including:

- ✓ High staff qualifications, including teachers with a bachelor degree;
- ✓ High-quality professional development for all staff;
- ✓ Child-to-instructional staff ratio of 10:1;
- ✓ Class size of no more than 20;

- ✓ Full day program;
- ✓ Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- ✓ Research-based, age appropriate instruction, curricula, and learning environments aligned to the state's Early Learning and Development Standards;
- ✓ Individualized accommodations and supports for children;
- ✓ Instructional staff salaries equal to local public kindergarten teachers;
- ✓ Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; and
- ✓ Evidence-based health and safety standards.

By offering these seats in diverse settings, communities enabled family choice and supported quality providers within their community. Child care centers are additionally supported to provide individualized support and accommodations for children beyond what the district partnership provides through access to Mental Health Consultants and Resource and Referral agency staff. These organizations support providers and teachers to meet the needs of every child, and provide individualized coaching and technical assistance to classrooms in child care centers.

These seats are also offered in sites receiving critical information about quality and improvement through the state's new unified quality rating and improvement system. This unified rating system is based on measuring what research indicates matters most for child development, the quality of teacher-child interactions, and measures all publicly-funded early childhood programs the same way, regardless of whether they are Head Start, school-based pre-K, or child care centers. In 2014, researchers from the University of Virginia conducted a study on Louisiana pre-K classrooms, which resulted in the following key takeaways about Louisiana's approach to accountability:

- Louisiana observations are accurate: local and research CLASS™ scores closely align.
- Children learn more in classrooms with higher CLASS™ scores.
- Adding other quality measures does not help identify effective classrooms.

With the first full year of implementation of the unified rating system completed, children and families are able to benefit from the availability of comparable ratings through the state's new tool, [Louisiana School and Center Finder](#). Children are also benefiting from an increased focus throughout the state on improving the quality of teacher-child interactions.

Through Coordinated Enrollment, families were able to make informed decisions about the best placement for their children. Families were also able to benefit from information campaigns and streamlined eligibility and application requirements when enrolling their children. Additionally, more than 2,029 children and families in these seats and centers were impacted by job-embedded coaching and access to comprehensive services.

### **Year 3 Impact for Teachers**

All teachers funded through the PreK Expansion Grant were paid salaries commensurate to local kindergarten teachers and received access to high-quality professional development. These teachers, plus additional teachers in the sites where grant-funded classrooms were placed, received job-embedded coaching aligned to the state's quality rating and improvement system. Teachers were supported to improve teacher-child interactions and use a developmentally appropriate formative assessment. Grant funds were also used to support teachers and improve instruction in diverse settings by providing quality-aligned curriculum and materials, including Hatch classroom materials and manipulatives or tools that support high-quality teacher child interactions that are typically available in school-based pre-K classrooms, to support improvement and quality in diverse, child care settings. Teachers in these communities also received high-quality professional

development aligned with CLASSTM, including Conscious Discipline.

### **Year 3 Impact for Communities**

With seats funded through the PreK Expansion Grant, communities continued to close the at-risk access gap to high-quality pre-K programs in Louisiana. Subgrantees offered more than half of the Year 3 seats in diverse settings, supporting parent choice of high-quality classrooms. In each of these communities, families are supported to choose publicly-funded seats, including PreK Expansion Grant seats in child care settings, through a coordinated enrollment process. Through community coordination and streamlined applications across provider types, families and children are benefiting from grant-supported partnerships to support mixed delivery and family choice. Additionally, in Year 3 more than 2,029 children in these communities accessed seats in classrooms that were improved through job-embedded coaching and access to comprehensive services. This additional job-embedded coaching aimed at improving teacher practice is often targeted to child care centers, which often do not receive the same level of daily support as school-based pre-K classrooms. By improving the birth-to-five pathway in their community, grantees are setting up more children to be kindergarten ready at the start of school. Communities are leveraging local partnerships to ensure at-risk families can access comprehensive services, including health screenings and support. These local partnerships include relationships with Head Start and their community partners, health care providers that support health and developmental screenings for at-risk families, and nonprofit partners that provide services to at-risk families. The Louisiana Department of Education (Department) is supporting subgrantees through collaboration sessions, materials, check-ins, and other resources to build successful partnerships between LEAs and centers. These centers are partners with the Lead Agencies in their local community networks, which further facilitated diverse placement of seats and support of family demand.

### **Overview of Progress**

Since 2012, Louisiana has worked to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented early childhood system that prepares only 54% of children for kindergarten, Louisiana passed a law (Act 3, 2012) to unify pre-K, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network. By empowering families with choice and ensuring easy access to high quality options, the state seeks to start every child on track for success. To build on this effort, in June 2015, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education passed [Bulletin 140: Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network](#), which establishes a statewide quality rating and improvement system that defines expectations for coordinated observations and coordinated enrollment. The statewide network is comprised of 65 local community networks, which are consortia of all publicly-funded early childhood programs within that community, including state public and nonpublic pre-K programs, Title I pre-K programs, Head Start programs, and programs receiving funds from the state's Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), with a Lead Agency serving as fiscal agent. For each community, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approves a Lead Agency to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations, which involves conducting two CLASS observations for each classroom in all publicly-funded sites, and coordinated enrollment, which involves convening all publicly-funded providers to simplify enrollment processes for at-risk families. In 2016-2017, performance profiles were released statewide for the first time, via [www.louisianaschools.com](http://www.louisianaschools.com).

Louisiana's unified rating and improvement system is comprised of two core components: ratings that relate to positive child outcomes, and information on classroom best practices. Louisiana uses CLASS™ a nationally regarded system of more than 60 measures that evaluate children's experience in the classroom. The CLASS™ tool produces a score measuring the effectiveness of the interactions between teachers and children within an early learning classroom. The score is based on four cycles of 80-minute observations completed by highly-qualified observers who evaluate how effectively the classroom is at providing a positive learning environment, supporting productive classroom management and organization, and engaging children in meaningful learning experiences. This tool is proven to be correlated with child outcomes, and provides teachers with actionable information to improve. Not only has CLASS™ been validated in thousands of classrooms nationwide, but it has received strong support from early childhood leaders and teachers across Louisiana. Additionally, researchers from the University of Virginia have released a [working paper](#) validating

Louisiana's approach and indicating how well observations were able to predict child gains in pre-K.

Louisiana believes those closest to children and families are best positioned to improve outcomes. Based on lessons learned from the three years of piloting, the accountability system was structured to rely on local observations, with third party observations used primarily as an audit of accuracy. Local communities are funded to observe every pre-K and toddler classroom in publicly-funded sites using nationally-certified observers once each semester, and are required to provide feedback to teachers based on the observation results. This enables communities to build capacity around CLASS™, and provides teachers and programs access to information and feedback throughout the year to best support teachers to improve. Communities are also required to establish best practices to ensure accuracy such as shadow scoring.

To ensure accuracy statewide, Louisiana contracts with a third party, University of Louisiana Lafayette, to audit the accuracy of local observations. Third party observes at least 50 percent of classrooms in every publicly-funded site, and observes at least 1 pre-K and 1 toddler classroom if a site serves these ages. Additional third party observations occurred in sites that could have potential local inaccuracies or conflicts of interest. Where local and third party scores differ greatly, third party scores replace local scores for the Performance Profile rating calculation. This approach allows local education leaders to receive a greater amount of feedback and information about what is happening in early childhood classrooms, and empowers those closest to teachers to support them to improve. At the same time, contracted third party observations ensure the accuracy of the rating, and provide feedback to local observers on their accuracy.

For the first time, Louisiana released performance data on all publicly funded early childhood programs, including early childhood centers, Head Start and prekindergarten through a unified K-12 system designed for families. In November 2017, the state released the [Louisiana School Finder](#), an interactive, first-of-its-kind online tool designed to help families more easily locate and evaluate schools and child care centers across the state. Among its many features, the new system offers performance profiles for all publicly funded early childhood programs in the state, including early childhood centers, Head Start and prekindergarten. It provides families with the site's overall performance rating, as well as a snapshot of the learning environment, teaching staff, student-to-teacher ratios and curriculum quality. The tool is the first of its kind in the nation. In subsequent years, the Louisiana School Finder will expand to provide information on student progress and include an interests and opportunities index indicating how schools fare in offering enriching activities to their students.

The [2016-2017 early childhood performance profiles](#) indicate:

- **All program types improved their average performance scores.** Of the roughly 1,500 early childhood centers, Head Start programs and prekindergarten sites to receive performance profiles in 2016-2017, nearly 70 percent provided children with care and instruction at levels that research shows promote kindergarten readiness. That is an improvement from last year, when about 60 percent of sites did. What's more: There is at least one Excellent-rated site in more than a third of the state's 65 community networks.
- **Statewide average scores improved in all measured areas.** Louisiana early childhood sites saw improvements across the board, from classroom climate to organization to instruction, at both the prekindergarten and toddler levels. The increase can be attributed, in part, to better aligned resources and strong professional development.
- **More early childhood program classrooms are embracing best practices.** Louisiana has seen a significant increase in the number of sites using a high-quality curriculum, from 48 percent in 2015-2016 to 77 percent in 2016-2017. In addition, more child care teachers are certified to teach than ever before.

Specifically, for sites that were funded to offer seats through the grant, 80% of returning programs improved their overall score in 2016-2017 from the practice year. 78% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. For Year 3, 76% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. These data reflect higher levels of quality and improvement than

statewide trends, and, given the diverse delivery of seats in high-need areas, show the benefit of the grant for Louisiana classrooms, communities, and children.

Additionally, the state made great progress in unifying early childhood with early elementary programs. Through the state's early childhood curriculum review process, aligned with the K-12 process, the Department contracted with experts to review infant, toddler, and pre-K curricula, and published the information from the reviews on the website to aid sites and schools in selecting high-quality curriculum that is aligned with Louisiana standards. The Department then used funds to support child care centers to purchase their choice of curricula rated the highest quality. Through other initiatives, including a Kindergarten Entry Assessment pilot, the Department continues to build connections between early childhood and early elementary grades. The Department also continues to build upon talent preparation, specifically through offering teachers in early learning centers the opportunity to receive a Louisiana early childhood ancillary certificate, allowing increased professionalism within the child care field. Finally, the Department offers several professional development opportunities that bring together leaders, principals, teachers, and directors from the birth-to third grade pathway, including quarterly collaboratives held regionally across the state and a statewide multi-day Teacher Leader summit, held in early June in New Orleans. These state sponsored professional development opportunities incorporate both lessons from the field and opportunities to collaborate across regions and ages.

### **Coordinated Enrollment**

In line with Bulletin 140, the sixteen communities participating in the Louisiana PreK Expansion Grant included these seats in their coordinated enrollment process. Coordinated enrollment involves four key areas:

- 1. Coordinated Information Campaign:** Inform families about the availability of publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs serving children four years of age or younger;
- 2. Coordinated Eligibility Determination:** Coordinate enrollment, eligibility criteria, and waiting lists to ensure that families are referred to other available publicly-funded early childhood programs should they be ineligible for or unable to access their primary choice;
- 3. Coordinated Application:** Collect family preferences regarding enrollment choices for publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs; and

**4. Matching Based on Preference:** Enroll at-risk children, using available public funds, based upon stated family preferences (e.g., a family ranks their preference of sites and communities match the family to their highest ranked preference available).

### **Building on State Progress**

Louisiana's implementation of the PreK Expansion Grant builds upon the state's progress in providing voluntary, high-quality pre-K programs through public and nonpublic providers. In 1988, BESE began the 8(g) Model Early Childhood Program to serve at-risk four-year-olds. Prior to Act 3, Louisiana created its primary state-funded pre-K program, known as LA 4, in 2001. Although 8(g) and LA4 are supported by different funding sources, the Department has established identical program quality requirements as part of its efforts to unify a fragmented system. In addition to LA 4, the state provides parents of at-risk children with access to quality nonpublic school and child care classrooms through the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) program.

Louisiana's LA 4 and NSECD programs are high-quality early childhood programs meeting the requirements specified in the grant. In fact, the LA 4 law establishes these requirements in statute, demonstrating the legislative commitment to high-quality pre-K. Moreover, these pre-K programs have a history of demonstrated results across diverse settings. Longitudinal studies show a profound impact as indicated by:

- Improved child outcomes measured by pre- and post-assessments;
- Higher scores on statewide tests in the 3rd and 8th grades (LEAP and iLEAP in 2012); and

- Fewer retentions and a reduction in referrals for special education services.

LA 4 and NSECD providers must adhere to assurances stipulating program requirements and are monitored each year against those program requirements to ensure quality standards are maintained. Both programs are consistently rated highly in the annual NIEER report. Together, these programs serve more than 17,000 four-year-olds in high-quality pre-K, but have done so through multiple, fragmented funding streams and applications for families. The Louisiana Legislature enacted Act 3(2012) to address the fragmentation and unify the system to drive better child outcomes across all programs, and create a coordinated enrollment system for families.

The Department, which has oversight for both programs, unified both child eligibility and program requirements for these two programs. Both are tightly aligned with the quality requirements of the grant, with program components including:

- High staff qualifications - teachers must have a bachelor degree and be certified;
- Low child to teacher ratios and small class sizes, 1:10 with a group size of 20; and
- Full day 6-hour program with comprehensive services.

The Department conducts an annual shared process for communities to indicate family demand for seats in high-quality pre-K. The state uses this process to ensure new seats provided through this grant were offered in communities where family demand exceeded the amount of publicly-funded seats available.

### **Challenges**

Subgrantees offered 50% of the Year 3 seats in diverse settings, supporting parent choice. The Department supported subgrantees through collaboration sessions, materials, check-ins, and other resources to build successful partnerships between LEAs and centers. These centers are partners with the Lead Agencies in their local community networks, which further facilitated diverse placement of seats and support of family demand. Many of the challenges faced in offering these partnerships included logistical hurdles of sharing ownership of classes and transportation. As a result of these conversations over the past three years, subgrantees and the Department are building on lessons learned to develop recommendations and resources for partnerships between schools and centers that will be provided to future grantees to support their partnerships as well. An additional challenge the state faces is the lack of an accountability technology system that unifies the diverse publicly-funded early childhood programs and their supports which the state is working to build. Sustaining the grant beyond Year 4 is a challenge the Department continues to work on, particularly in centers providing diverse delivery of classes, who built up capacity to offer high quality programs.

### **Conclusion**

In Year 3, the state has used the PreK Expansion Grant to continue its progress in unifying a fragmented system, increasing access for at-risk families, and improving quality of early childhood programs. Across all early childhood programs, Louisiana has committed to coordinating all early childhood funding to improve kindergarten readiness outcomes.

The state also works with local providers to coordinate the myriad early childhood funding streams. The Department provides technical assistance on increasing access and maximizing services to children through coordination of state and federal funds. Louisiana is in a unique position to maximize existing funds because of the Community Network structure. In addition to the ongoing work to coordinate existing resources, the state is partnering with Community Networks to transform early childhood and develop a unified system. Louisiana's commitment to this work is evident in the \$12.8 million the state will contribute over the four-year-period of the grant, a 40% match of the PreK Expansion Grant funds. Over the course of the grant, the state will continue to work intensively with subgrantees to leverage all existing funding to maximize quality and access for early childhood services. In Year 4, more families, teachers, and communities across the state will be impacted by grant funding that allows Louisiana to serve more than 4,500 additional children and improve more than 6,000 seats over the four year grant period. At full scale in year four, the grant funding will reduce the statewide gap

between seats requested by parents and seats provided by 36 percent.



**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: LA

PR/Award #: S419B150035

**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.

In the third year of the grant, sixteen diverse communities across the state of Louisiana were funded to enroll 1,440 at-risk four-year-old children in traditional and mixed delivery settings. At-risk children are defined in Louisiana as children in families with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, with disabilities, in foster care, who are English language learners, and/or experiencing homelessness. Although pre-K enrollment is transient and often changing, 91% of the grant-funded seats were filled as of December 1. These grant-funded seats were largely offered in child care centers in partnership with local school districts or charter schools, supporting parent choice of high-quality pre-K programs.

In June 2015, the State Board established a unified statewide early childhood quality rating and improvement system through *Bulletin 140: Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network*. The statewide network is comprised of 65 local community networks, which are consortia of all publicly-funded early childhood programs within that community: public and nonpublic pre-K, Head Start, and child care centers receiving CCAP. For each community, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approves a Lead Agency to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations, which involves conducting two *CLASS™* observations for each classroom in all publicly-funded sites, and coordinated enrollment, which involves convening all publicly-funded providers to simplify enrollment processes for at-risk families. Every community across the state a performance profile. These performance profiles include a rating based on rigorous classroom observations using the *CLASS™* system of measures. Performance profiles also include information on best practices that measure important quality inputs, including use of ongoing assessment and a high-quality curriculum, the education and certifications of teachers, and program investment in high levels of individual attention for children. These profiles provide families with key information about all sites and community networks serving children through public funds. All sites participating in the PreK Expansion Grant received a performance profile based on their 2016-2017 *CLASS™* scores and informational metrics.

In line with Bulletin 140, the sixteen communities participating in the Louisiana PreK Expansion Grant included these seats in their coordinated enrollment process which involves four key areas:

- 1. Coordinated Information Campaign:** Inform families about the availability of publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs serving children four years of age or younger;
- 2. Coordinated Eligibility Determination:** Coordinate enrollment, eligibility criteria, and waiting lists to ensure that families are referred to other available publicly-funded early childhood programs should they be ineligible for or unable to access their primary choice;
- 3. Coordinated Application:** Collect family preferences regarding enrollment choices for publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs; and

**4. Matching Based on Preference:** Enroll at-risk children, using available public funds, based upon stated family preferences. (e.g., a family ranks their preference of sites and communities match the family to their highest ranked preference available).

The lead agency for each subgrantee community network submitted a coordinated enrollment plan specifically addressing the new PreK Expansion Grant seats, demonstrating how these seats would be included in each of the four areas. Families were engaged and informed about these seats through local information campaigns that included round ups, advertisements, informational flyers and guides, websites, and other local opportunities. In addition, since many of these seats are offered through mixed delivery in child care settings, lead agencies made specific efforts during the application period to provide information to families of three-year-olds currently attending centers receiving grant-funded seats, to support parent choice and stability of care for these at-risk children. Lead agencies continue to provide information to families interested in pre-K seats throughout the year. Beginning in the spring and continuing throughout the fall, the sixteen subgrantees convened regularly through in-person and phone sessions, and collaborated on successful strategies to recruit and engage families for these seats.

The state has provided several supports to Community Networks for building coordinated enrollment systems. Coordinated enrollment was implemented in cohorts of Community Network Pilots over a span of three years. Each cohort received multiple webinars and trainings, in-person technical assistance and collaboration sessions, and materials and guidance as they phased in implementation of the four key areas of coordinated enrollment. All sixteen subgrantees for the third year of the grant have worked to achieve full implementation of coordinated enrollment this year. Each year, the state of coordinated enrollment in community networks is assessed and reported, and community networks submit plans for implementing and improving coordinated enrollment for the following year. The state provides feedback, guidance, technical assistance, and shares best practices to support continued improvement in coordination and engagement for families and providers. As part of the work to support communities in continued improvement, the Department releases an annual District Planning Guide that spans early childhood through high school. The [2017-2018 District Planning Guide](#) serves as the primary planning tool for LEAs in making academic and programmatic decisions for the upcoming school year. The purpose of this tool is to guide planning conversations between LEAs and Department field support teams to reflect on this year's data and implement necessary changes for 2018-2019, and highlight key planning decisions, available resources, and available funds for the upcoming year.

In the third year of the grant, sixteen diverse communities across the state of Louisiana were funded to enroll 1,440 at-risk children in traditional and mixed delivery settings. At-risk children are defined as children in families with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, with disabilities, in foster care, who are English language learners, and/or experiencing homelessness. The twelve subgrantees from Year 2 were joined by four new subgrantees for Year 3, and represent both rural and urban communities, now covering areas across the entire state: Caddo, Calcasieu, City of Monroe (Ouachita), Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lincoln, Orleans, Plaquemines, Rapides, St. John, Tangipahoa and Union. While these 1,440 grant-funded seats were mainly offered in child care centers in partnership with local school districts or charter schools, a few communities chose to offer seats in their local Head Start. These options provided more opportunities to support parent choice of high-quality pre-K programs. Additionally, over 2,029 children accessed seats in classrooms that were improved through job-embedded coaching, access to comprehensive services, and other improvements aligned with the state's quality rating and improvement system.

Through Louisiana's early childhood performance profiles, the quality of early childhood sites is measured and communicated. These profiles measure the quality of teacher-child interactions that will prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. The [2016-2017 early childhood performance profiles](#) indicate:

- **All program types improved their average performance scores.** Of the roughly 1,500 early childhood centers, Head Start programs and prekindergarten sites to receive performance profiles in 2016-2017, nearly 70 percent provided children with care and instruction at levels that research shows promote kindergarten readiness. That is an improvement from last year, when about 60 percent of sites did. What's more: There is at least one Excellent-rated site in more than a third of the state's 65 community

networks.

- **Statewide average scores improved in all measured areas.** Louisiana early childhood sites saw improvements across the board, from classroom climate to organization to instruction, at both the prekindergarten and toddler levels. The increase can be attributed, in part, to better aligned resources and strong professional development.
- **More early childhood program classrooms are embracing best practices.** Louisiana has seen a significant increase in the number of sites using a high-quality curriculum, from 48 percent in 2015-2016 to 77 percent in 2016-2017. In addition, more child care teachers are certified to teach than ever before.

Specifically, for sites that were funded to offer seats through the grant, 80% of returning programs improved their overall score in 2016-2017 from the practice year. 78% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. For Year 3, 76% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. These data reflect higher levels of quality and improvement than statewide trends, and, given the diverse delivery of seats in high-need areas, show the benefit of the grant for Louisiana classrooms, communities, and children. Through the grant, the state, as well as lead agencies, continues to provide supports to sites to improve to proficiency and beyond.

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.*

The Department has leveraged its community network structure to support providers to improve coordination and services for children receiving special education services. Across the state, Louisiana has been incredibly successful at working with early childhood providers to use federal funding to support inclusion practices, with each of the sixteen subgrantees providing inclusive settings. The state has increased the percentage of children with special needs receiving services in regular education programs from 36.5% (2004) to 87.5% (2013). The state is currently serving 9,443 children age 4 with disabilities in a regular education program. About 4% of the children attending pre-K through PreK Expansion Grant are identified as children with disabilities, with more in the identification process during their four-year-old year.

All LEAs have Child Search/Pupil Appraisal staff responsible for seeking children with a disability or suspected of having a disability. Part of this responsibility includes providing developmental screenings when referrals have been made by providers of child care, or health care providers. The Department is working on using stakeholder groups to better understand gaps related to local early identification processes and develop a plan to address these gaps. LEAs are also responsible for working with their Early Steps (Part C) counterparts. One of their responsibilities is to ensure that children with disabilities transition from Part C (birth to 3) to Part B (3-5 year-old) services on or before the child's third birthday. As part of the monitoring processes for the OSEP reporting, the Department verifies that programs have 100% compliance with this indicator and requires a Plan of Action to ensure that in the future, transitions do occur in a timely manner.

#### Increasing Inclusion

The state is also working with Community Networks to explore more ways to expand inclusion in early childhood. In these inclusive settings, regular education students are brought into special education classrooms for part of the school day or for the full school day. This practice provides key benefits for children:

- Provides opportunities for children with disabilities to learn alongside regularly developing peers, which helps to improve oral language proficiencies;

- Maximizes seats for regular education students; and
- Addresses social and emotional development by creating an environment that encourages tolerance and acceptance of others and removing the social stigma of disabilities.

For teachers, inclusion deepens processes for collaboration and coordination between regular education and special education program staff. The Department has already provided incentives for Community Networks to use inclusive mechanisms through state Preschool Inclusion Grants to selected communities. In addition, grant funding provided training for regular education teachers on effectively serving children with disabilities, ongoing coaching support and other materials and resources that support inclusive practices. To support teachers in inclusive settings, the Department launched the Special Learners Pilot in 2016, which provides opportunities for teachers in inclusive classrooms birth-to-five to participate in high-quality professional development aligned to CLASS™, with a specific focus on supporting interactions and instruction for all learners. Ten of the twelve grantees from Year 2 participated in this grant, including Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Orleans, Ouachita (City of Monroe), and Tangipahoa.

#### Guidelines and Resources

In the Guidelines for LA 4 and NSECD programs, eligibility requirements indicate that programs cannot deny access, participation or funding to children on the basis of race, color, or national origin, gender or disability. PreK Expansion Grant seats are aligned to these requirements. To support these state pre-K providers, the Department designed and posted a brochure on effective Early Childhood Inclusion practices. In addition, the Department has designed and posted transition booklets for communities to use as a guide to ensure timely transitions.

This year, the Department released [Louisiana's Pre-K through Third Grade guidebook](#) to provide additional information about pre-K to grade three alignment. This guidebook provides site and system leaders with information and guidance on creating strong plans for their schools that ensure quality and continuity of proven practices across pre-K through third grade, so children and families experiences smooth and effective transitions, thrive in early elementary years, and achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond. This guidebook also provides information for sites on using formal diagnostic assessments for identification and differentiation.

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

As a result of PreK Expansion Grant funding, Louisiana will increase pre-K seats to serve more than 4,500 additional at-risk children in high-quality pre-K programs over the four year grant period. At-risk children are defined in Louisiana as children in families with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, with disabilities, in foster care, who are English language learners, and/or experiencing homelessness. This year of the grant, 1440 seats were funded in High-Quality Pre-K Programs through the grant. At full scale, in the fourth year, the grant funding will reduce the statewide gap between seats requested by parents and seats provided by 36%.

Subgrantees, the sixteen lead agencies for the communities selected for the grant, have worked closely with the state to include the seats funded through the grant in the state's overall plan to unify a fragmented system and increase access to high-quality choices for at-risk families. Lead agencies worked closely with their program partners within their consortia of early learning providers to build partnerships between centers and public schools or charters, developing MOUs to fund these classrooms in mixed delivery settings while ensuring that the classrooms met the high-quality state pre-K standards. These partnerships allowed families to make choices for the care and education of their children. Subgrantees submitted plans, and received feedback and support aligned to these plans, to include these seats within their leadership, support, and enrollment responsibilities. Through collaborative leadership partnerships that communities have already worked to build, center directors and LEAs were able to work together to provide teacher and classroom supports, including coaching and comprehensive service partnerships. Seats were included in the coordinated enrollment process, allowing the community as a whole to recruit children and determine eligibility for programs. Families completed one unified application for all programs in the community, including the grant-funded classrooms, and were matched to programs based on their preferences.

Subgrantees additionally submitted plans to show how improvements funded through the grant, including comprehensive services, coaching, professional development, and resources, were local choices guided by the state's framework to improve program quality. Subgrantees were required to ensure that the grant funded classrooms and improved classrooms were receiving on-going, job-embedded coaching around teacher-child interactions. Funds were additionally used to support quality improvements, including high-quality curriculum and job-embedded professional development to support its use. Through regular check-ins, annual monitoring, and state approval of reimbursements, subgrantees continue to demonstrate commitment toward using the grant to support increased access to high-quality early childhood programs for at-risk families and eligible children.

#### Overview of State Progress

Louisiana has worked to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented early childhood system that prepares only 54% of children for kindergarten, Louisiana passed Act 3(2012) to unify pre-K, Head Start, and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network. In June 2015, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) passed Bulletin 140: Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network, which establishes a statewide quality rating and improvement system that defines expectations for all publicly-funded programs within local community networks. These local networks, which are expected to serve all publicly-funded at-risk children birth to five, are empowered to pilot innovative approaches to increasing quality and improving access. This policy was the result of engagement of both local and national stakeholders, review and feedback from the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council, and lessons learned from initial pilot approaches to implementing Act 3(2012).

Louisiana believes those closest to children and families are best positioned to improve outcomes. Each network functions as a consortium of all publicly-funded local early learning providers, including state public and nonpublic pre-K programs, Title I pre-K programs, Head Start programs, and programs receiving funds from the state's Child Care Development Fund, with a Lead Agency serving as fiscal agent. While most of these seats are placed in child care or school settings, one class has been placed in a Head Start early learning center, and the community relationships with Head Start have been important in providing comprehensive services for children served through the grant. Lead Agencies representing each community network across the state are creating cross-sector teams to unite around the work of measuring and improving access and quality of early childhood programs under a unified system of academic and development standards, enrollment, and teacher

preparation expectations. Community Networks are required to:

- **Lead Collaboratively:** Develop a collaborative leadership structure that represents child care, Head Start, public pre-K and nonpublic pre-K leaders;
- **Support Teachers:** Observe and provide feedback to teachers using a highly-regarded, research-based tool (CLASS™) twice annually, and ensure teachers have access to evidence-based professional development; and,
- **Coordinate Enrollment:** Coordinate information and applications across all programs for families.

For the first time, Louisiana released performance data on all publicly funded early childhood programs, including early childhood centers, Head Start and prekindergarten in fall 2017. This information:

- measures core elements needed for positive child outcomes;
- provides a clear and focused path to improvement; and
- gives families an easy way to compare choices in their community.

With the implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Louisiana seized the opportunity to collaborate with educators, parents, business and community leaders statewide to create and report on an improved education system that provides all students with equal access and opportunity to high-quality learning. Part of that strategy was to create a user-friendly platform able to host a wide array of information on school and center quality, and present that data in a way that was both transparent and easy to understand. In fall 2017, the Department released all K-12 report cards and early childhood performance profiles via [www.louisianaschools.com](http://www.louisianaschools.com). The overall performance ratings for early childhood performance profiles are derived from an observation-based evaluation system and reported in four categories--Excellent, Proficient, Approaching Proficient and Unsatisfactory. In addition to the overall rating, the performance profiles provide a snapshot of each center's educator workforce, student-to-teacher ratios, and curriculum quality.

Among its many features, the Louisiana School Finder provides families with:

- school performance scores and early childhood performance ratings that show how well schools and centers are preparing students for the next grade-level;
- listings of course offerings, clubs, enrichment and extracurricular activities;
- a comparison tool and filters to allow users to customize their search and identify the schools and early childhood centers that are the right fit for their child; and
- basic information about schools and centers, such as their address, website, hours of operation, and principal or director's name.

The [2016-2017 early childhood performance profiles](#) indicate:

- **All program types improved their average performance scores.** Of the roughly 1,500 early childhood centers, Head Start programs and prekindergarten sites to receive performance profiles in 2016-2017, nearly 70 percent provided children with care and instruction at levels that research shows promote kindergarten readiness. That is an improvement from last year, when about 60 percent of sites did. What's more: There is at least one Excellent-rated site in more than a third of the state's 65 community networks.
- **Statewide average scores improved in all measured areas.** Louisiana early childhood sites saw improvements across the board, from classroom climate to organization to instruction, at both the prekindergarten and toddler levels. The increase can be attributed, in part, to better aligned resources and strong professional development.
- **More early childhood program classrooms are embracing best practices.** Louisiana has seen a significant increase in the number of sites using a high-quality curriculum, from 48 percent in 2015-2016 to 77 percent in 2016-2017. In addition, more child care teachers are certified to teach than

ever before.

Specifically, for sites that were funded to offer seats through the grant, 80% of returning programs improved their overall score in 2016-2017 from the practice year. 78% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. For Year 3, 76% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. These data reflect higher levels of quality and improvement than statewide trends, and, given the diverse delivery of seats in high-need areas, show the benefit of the grant for Louisiana classrooms, communities, and children.

**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.

### **State PreK Program Enrollment**

Louisiana's ambitious and achievable plan for the PreK Expansion Grant builds upon the state's progress in providing high-quality pre-K programs through public and nonpublic providers. Louisiana's primary state-funded pre-K program, LA 4, has a history of quality and achievement, with research demonstrating lasting cognitive benefits to children through the eighth grade. In addition to LA 4, the state provides parents of at-risk children with access to quality nonpublic school and child care classrooms through the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) program. At-risk children are defined in Louisiana as children in families with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, with disabilities, in foster care, who are English language learners, and/or experiencing homelessness.

Louisiana serves 16,283 at-risk children through LA 4, and an additional 1,340 children through NSECD, for a combined total of more than 17,000 at-risk four-year-olds in high-quality pre-K. Enrollment data for these Pre-K programs is stable from last year. The additional 1440 seats offered through the PreK Expansion Grant represents an increase in the number of children served overall, which is a xx percent increase in percentage of children served in the 2017-2018 school year. Closing the gap between parent demand for and availability of quality pre-K seats is key to improving kindergarten readiness in Louisiana; therefore the state intends to use more than three-fourths (\$23.7M) of the grant to create new seats.

### **State Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Quality and Access**

The state implements high-quality pre-K programs through Louisiana's local community network approach set out in *Bulletin 140: Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network*, which establishes a statewide quality rating and improvement system that defines expectations for all publicly-funded programs within local community networks. These local networks, which are expected to serve all publicly-funded at-risk children birth to five, are empowered to pilot innovative approaches to increasing quality and improving access. For each community, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approves a Lead Agency to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations, which involves conducting two *CLASS™* observations for each classroom in all publicly-funded sites, and coordinated enrollment, which involves convening all publicly-funded providers to simplify enrollment processes for at-risk families. This policy was the result of engagement of both local and national stakeholders, review and feedback from the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council, and lessons learned from initial pilot approaches to implementing Act 3(2012).

Louisiana believes those closest to children and families are best positioned to improve outcomes. Each network functions as a consortium of all publicly-funded local early learning providers, including state public and nonpublic pre-K programs, Title I pre-K programs, Head Start programs, and programs receiving funds from the state's Child Care Development Fund, with a Lead Agency serving as fiscal agent. Lead Agencies representing each community network across the state are creating cross-sector teams to unite around the

work of measuring and improving access and quality of early childhood programs under a unified system of academic and development standards, enrollment, and teacher preparation expectations. Community Networks are required to:

- **Lead Collaboratively:** Develop a collaborative leadership structure that represents child care, Head Start, public pre-K and nonpublic pre-K leaders;
- **Support Teachers:** Observe and provide feedback to teachers using a highly-regarded, research-based tool (*CLASS™*) twice annually, and ensure teachers have access to evidence-based professional development; and,
- **Coordinate Enrollment:** Coordinate information and applications across all programs for families.

### Quality Rating and Improvement System

To monitor the success of this community based collaborative work, the state implemented a unified quality rating and improvement system, with every publicly-funded program serving children ages birth to five receiving a Performance Profile. These profiles provide a clear, easy-to-understand rating of the quality of teacher-child interactions based on *CLASS™*. Local community networks were funded to use *CLASS™* reliably to observe every PreK and Toddler classroom in publicly-funded sites twice annually.

The Performance Profiles, the result for each site and community of the state's quality rating and improvement system, also include information regarding the child-to-staff ratios, the quality of curriculum used, the use of ongoing formative assessment, and other metrics. While the results of the informational metrics are included on the profile, they are not considered in the performance profile rating.

To provide support to districts and programs in selecting high-quality curriculum, the Department has reviewed birth-to-five curricula, submitted by vendors and districts, based on multiple criteria, including quality and alignment with the state's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). Over 35 reviews of early childhood curriculum have already been posted publicly on the Department's website. Based on the review, curricula are sorted into tiers, which are aligned to the informational metric on curriculum included in the Performance Profile. The results of these curriculum reviews, which are aligned with the state's K-12 instructional support efforts, were made available beginning April 1, 2016. The state has additionally funded *GOLD* by Teaching Strategies portfolios and training for all publicly-funded programs, to support use of ongoing, formative child assessment. Finally, the state provides a free online training, *CONNECT*, on the birth-to-five ELDS, which is available as a support to all publicly-funded programs.

The Department continues to provide professional development opportunities aligned to the quality rating and improvement system to pre-K supervisors through quarterly collaboratives, and pre-K teachers through teacher leader events that are aligned to the state's quality rating and improvement system. Through the state's efforts to unify the early childhood system, these opportunities are available to all early childhood teachers and supervisors in publicly-funded programs, including Head Start, public and nonpublic pre-K, and child care centers receiving CCDF.

This year, the Department released [Louisiana's Pre-K through Third Grade guidebook](#) to provide additional information about pre-K to grade three alignment. This guidebook provides site and system leaders with information and guidance on creating strong plans for their schools that ensure quality and continuity of proven practices across pre-K through third grade, so children and families experiences smooth and effective transitions, thrive in early elementary years, and achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond. Along with this resource to align pre-k to grade three practices, the Department released a [birth-to-twelfth grade guide](#) to purchasing professional development, focused on supporting the field to purchase training that will help them to implement a high-quality curriculum. The Department has a [birth-to-twelfth grade curriculum review](#) process that results in a curriculum being rated as Tier 1, 2, or 3, depending on quality and alignment with the Louisiana ELDS. To support local programs and communities in their curriculum selection process, the reviews are posted publicly on the Department's website, along with negotiated rates that any program in Louisiana can use to purchase a Tier 1 curriculum. With a large emphasis over the past two years on acquiring a high quality curriculum, the Department has now begun to consider what implementation of a high-quality curriculum should look like across program settings and age levels. The Department has developed a birth-to-twelfth grade [Curriculum Implementation Scale](#). By providing these aligned resources to

promote quality from birth through twelfth grade, the Department is supporting an intentional pathway for improvement that promotes collaboration between early childhood and early elementary programs.

**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.

**Kindergarten Readiness Definition:**

In 2011, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) established a statewide comprehensive definition of kindergarten readiness. In Bulletin 140, a BESE policy which establishes a statewide quality rating and improvement system that defines expectations for all publicly-funded programs, section §305 includes this definition by stating that:

**Kindergarten Readiness Definition:**

Children who are ready for kindergarten are expected to demonstrate:

1. cognitive abilities, which include knowledge and skills in:
  - a. early literacy, such as phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabetic understanding, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and emergent writing;
  - b. basic numeracy concepts, such as rote counting and number awareness, sorting, classifying, comparing, patterning, and spatial relationships.
2. basic science concepts, such as making observations, exploring the world using their senses, and using appropriate scientific vocabulary related to topics
3. basic social studies concepts, such as self-awareness and their relationship to family and community, and an

awareness of money and time;

4. response to and participation in music, movement, visual and dramatic arts experiences and activities;

5. abilities, either assisted or unassisted, that show an awareness of health, hygiene, and environmental hazards, in addition to gross and fine motor skills;

6. social and emotional competencies, including self-regulation, self-identity, self-reliance, respect for others, and interpersonal skills; and

7. approaches to learning, such as reasoning and problem-solving, engagement, persistence, and eagerness to learn.

All of the state's work to unify the early childhood system through the statewide early childhood network is intended to improve kindergarten readiness for all children. The Department is pursuing using funding, including the PreK Expansion Grant state set-aside, to build an early childhood accountability technology system. The system will serve as a single source of meaningful information for state agencies, providers, and families and allow linkages between early childhood programs and elementary school education. These linkages will cross child care, Head Start, and state pre-K programs, and will also link with the statewide longitudinal data systems as well. Without the early childhood accountability technology system, there is currently no way to link pre-K experiences with any Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) results.

#### **Assessments, Training, and Test Quality:**

As required by law, the state annually assesses kindergarten readiness against the definition using the comprehensive *Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)* as a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) for all children. The assessment evaluates language, visual, auditory, mathematical concepts and operations, memory, print and writing, social and emotional, and fine and gross motor skills. The DSC test 34 distinct learning objectives. The results are used by teachers for planning purposes. In addition to the DSC, state policy requires a literacy screener such as *DIBELS-Next* to be used in kindergarten. Current statewide kindergarten readiness based on the literacy screener is 54%. The DSC is administered the week before children start Kindergarten; the literacy screener is administered within the first 30 days of school. The child's teacher administers both assessments.

The DSC has been used for over a decade. The literacy screener has been used for over 5 years. All teachers administering the assessment are required to be trained to use the assessments. Local districts are responsible for providing the training and ensuring reliability in the administration of the measures.

As required by Act 3, Louisiana is building a statewide quality rating and improvement system to measure the quality of all early childhood programs as well as the support provided by the Community Network. To ensure all programs are conducting ongoing, authentic assessment of children to help them make progress towards kindergarten readiness, the Department funded the use of *GOLD* by Teaching Strategies for the 2016-2017 school year for all publicly-funded early childhood programs. A third-party study demonstrated that *GOLD* is 95% aligned with the state's birth-to-five Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). State pre-K programs, including the PreK Expansion Grant classrooms, are required to use *GOLD* or another approved developmentally appropriate assessment and report checkpoint levels three times during the school year. Since the first pilot approaches to implementing Act 3 (2012), the Department has provided local community networks funds to support training for teachers on *GOLD*, and as well provides technical assistance to teachers and supervisors. The Department will continue to support programs to use developmentally appropriate assessment as a tool to achieve kindergarten readiness in future years of the grant. All PreK Expansion Grant classrooms are currently using *GOLD* as a formative assessment.

#### **Plans for Year 4 Reporting:**

Louisiana continues to make progress in meeting this GPRA measure as it transitions statewide to a new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). After successful pilots the previous school year, the state approved two new KRAs: Gold Survey and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). Both assessments measure Language and Literacy, Social-Emotional, Approaches to Learning/Cognitive, Math, and Physical development. Pilot results found that the DRDP and Gold Survey items and results are strongly correlated. For the current school year, 17 school systems selected Gold, 63 selected DRDP, and 26 continued to use the state's previously approved assessment from 1987, the Developing Skills Checklist (DSC). The DSC will be completely phased out at the end of this school year and these 26 school systems will use one of the new assessments next school

year. The state continues to offer technical assistance to support school systems to use the new assessments effectively.

**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.**

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## 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.*

Louisiana will use the funds received over the grant period for State Preschool Program infrastructure and quality improvements to create a statewide early childhood accountability technology system that will serve as a single source of information for state oversight, planning, and support for providers and families while protecting children's confidential information. This will enable the state to ensure pre-K quality and access statewide as well as provide a portal for families to access meaningful information about early childhood programs.

This accountability-based system will support a broader set of improvements to quality and access, such as assuring the state can address family demand for quality; the state can track how many children are enrolled in each program and the services they receive; and the state can closely monitor children's progress toward being prepared for kindergarten. Collecting comprehensive, de-identified data (while assuring child privacy) will improve the state's ability to evaluate program quality, thus aiding the effort to produce performance profiles for all providers and communities so that families can make more informed choices.

The Department decided to add certain components of the K-12 technology systems into the project in an effort to build a comprehensive birth-to-grade-12 system, which will enable the state to assure children's progress from early childhood throughout their school careers. This has been challenging, as it has created a larger project with a more complicated structure, but it will ultimately allow for a more seamless longitudinal analysis of programs and better support the Department's efforts to move towards a unified birth-to-twelve system.

The Department has contracted with TCC in an effort to develop a comprehensive birth to grade 12 system which will include the longitudinal accountability system. TCC has extensive experience in early childhood in several states.

With a longitudinal accountability system, Louisiana will be better positioned to assess the quality of all publicly-funded early childhood programs, have real-time information needed to drive support and allocation decisions, and better partner with families and other organizations to improve services for children while ensuring the privacy of data.

Work with TCC began in January 2018. It is anticipated that the system will be released in three phases with the first release in fall/winter 2018 and will be completed in its entirety in approximately 3 years.

## 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.

Louisiana believes those closest to children and families are best positioned to improve outcomes. For Year 3 of the PreK Expansion Grant, Louisiana partnered with sixteen local community networks to implement high-quality pre-K programs. The Department subgranted funds to the lead agencies who serve as the fiscal agents for these local community networks, which are each a consortium of early learning providers. These networks serve Caddo, Calcasieu, City of Monroe (Ouachita), Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lincoln, Orleans, Plaquemines, Rapides, St. John, Tangipahoa, and Union. These communities are a mix of rural and urban parishes and represent geographical diversity in the state. The state selected these subgrantees to ensure new pre-K seats will be allocated to high-need communities that will be able to increase family choice and access to high-quality programs. Though the state is focusing on expanding pre-K programs, grant funding is also used to improve current seats as well. Grant-funded seats are aligned to the state pre-K program, and meet all the quality requirements of the state pre-K program.

#### **Approach to Implementing High-Quality Seats**

Each local community network functions as a consortium of all publicly-funded local early learning providers, including state public and nonpublic pre-K programs, Title I pre-K programs, Head Start programs, and programs receiving funds from the state's Child Care Development Fund, with a Lead Agency serving as fiscal agent. Through these local structures, lead agencies are able to leverage their collaborations to facilitate partnerships between LEAs and diverse providers to ensure that grant-funded classrooms are high-quality pre-K classrooms that are aligned to the state's LA 4 and NSECD program.

#### **Structural Elements**

All state-funded pre-K programs, including grant-funded classrooms offered in child care centers, are required to meet the following high-quality requirements:

- ✓ High staff qualifications, including teachers with a bachelor degree
- ✓ High-quality professional development for all staff
- ✓ Child-to-instructional staff ratio of 10:1
- ✓ Class size of no more than 20
- ✓ Full day program
- ✓ Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities
- ✓ Research-based, age appropriate instruction, curricula, and learning environments aligned to the state's Early Learning and Development Standards
- ✓ Individualized accommodations and supports for children
- ✓ Instructional staff salaries equal to local public kindergarten teachers
- ✓ Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement
- ✓ Comprehensive services, including vision and hearing screenings
- ✓ Evidence-based health and safety standards

Programs sign assurances indicating they will meet these structural elements, and are monitored accordingly. To support additional access to comprehensive services beyond what state pre-K programs offer, Lead

Agencies were able to leverage both their program partners and their community partners in their networks. To meet these requirements, Lead Agencies used grant improvement funding to contract with providers or create agreements with Head Starts, non-profits, advocacy organizations, and other local partners or businesses invested in supporting early childhood work in their communities to provide health and developmental screenings, access to community partnerships, and ensure family needs are addressed.

### **Grant-funded Improvements**

Lead agencies enhanced these high-quality structural components by improving professional development and providing coaching that supports the growth and development of teachers. Coaching and professional development is targeted particularly toward teacher understanding of quality teacher-child interactions, aligned to *CLASS™*, and use of developmentally appropriate assessment. Teachers participated in LEA professional development aligned to required annual observations, in addition to receiving job-embedded coaching through the grant. Coaching for grant-funded classrooms is provided weekly, and coaches work with the Lead Agency to ensure their work is targeted toward improvement and supported by instructional leaders and other available resources. Coaches funded through the grant are additionally used to support similar improvements for other publicly-funded sites and classrooms in the community, including state pre-K classrooms and child care centers serving children through CCDF.

Grant funds were additionally used to purchase developmentally appropriate curricula and instructional materials to support learning environments aligned with Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards in sites where grant-funded classrooms are placed. These materials improved both grant-funded classrooms placed in child care centers and other classrooms in the center, with children birth-to-four who may progress into the PreK Expansion Grant classroom in future years of the grant, and will also likely progress into public kindergarten classrooms.

### **Additional Quality Requirements for State PreK Programs**

In addition to the structural requirements of state Pre-K programs, all publicly-funded early childhood programs are required by law to participate in the state's quality rating and improvement system established by Bulletin 140. Lead Agencies across the state are required to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations, which involves conducting two *CLASS™* observations annually for each classroom in all publicly-funded sites. Approximately 1,200 observers completed at least one observation in 2016-2017, showing the increase in local capacity to understand high-quality in early childhood classrooms. Most importantly, every site now has a common frame of understanding of what high-quality early childhood instructions and interactions should look like.

To ensure accuracy statewide, Louisiana contracts with a third party, University of Louisiana Lafayette, to audit the accuracy of local observations. Third party observes 50 percent of classrooms in every publicly-funded site, and observes at least 1 PreK and 1 toddler classroom if a site serves these ages. Additional third party observations occurred in sites that could have potential local inaccuracies or conflicts of interest. Where local and third party scores differ greatly, third party scores replace local scores for the Performance Profile rating calculation. This approach allows local education leaders to receive a greater amount of feedback and information about what is happening in early childhood classrooms, and empowers those closest to teachers to support them to improve. At the same time, contracted third party observations ensure the accuracy of the rating, and provide feedback to local observers on their accuracy. Results from all observations, local and third party, are entered into the state's *CLASS™* system, and are available to the state, lead agencies, and sites.

In Louisiana, the quality of teacher-child outcomes is considered just as important as the structural inputs, and a specific emphasis on improving teacher-child interactions is evident in all components of support and accountability provided to these programs. The Department is focused on achieving proficiency across all publicly-funded programs - a necessary level of quality of interactions to achieve kindergarten readiness for all children.

The [2016-2017 early childhood performance profiles](#) indicate:

- **All program types improved their average performance scores.** Of the roughly 1,500 early childhood centers, Head Start programs and prekindergarten sites to receive performance profiles in 2016-2017, nearly 70 percent provided children with care and instruction at levels that research shows promote

kindergarten readiness. That is an improvement from last year, when about 60 percent of sites did. What's more: There is at least one Excellent-rated site in more than a third of the state's 65 community networks.

- **Statewide average scores improved in all measured areas.** Louisiana early childhood sites saw improvements across the board, from classroom climate to organization to instruction, at both the prekindergarten and toddler levels. The increase can be attributed, in part, to better aligned resources and strong professional development.
- **More early childhood program classrooms are embracing best practices.** Louisiana has seen a significant increase in the number of sites using a high-quality curriculum, from 48 percent in 2015-2016 to 77 percent in 2016-2017. In addition, more child care teachers are certified to teach than ever before.

Specifically, for sites that were funded to offer seats through the grant, 80% of returning programs improved their overall score in 2016-2017 from the practice year. 78% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. For Year 3, 76% of sites serving children through the grant scored Proficient and above in 2016-2017. These data reflect higher levels of quality and improvement than statewide trends, and, given the diverse delivery of seats in high-need areas, show the benefit of the grant for Louisiana classrooms, communities, and children.

PreK Expansion Grant funded classrooms are monitored through the same tools and system as the state public and nonpublic pre-K programs. Statewide Monitoring focuses on both quality measures, such as teacher degrees, and eligibility requirements, to ensure only eligible children are served through the funds. Monitoring findings result in corrective action plans coordinated across the state pre-K programs manager and the Statewide Monitoring staff, to support programs to meet the minimum quality requirements established by program guidelines.

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

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

In year 3, sixteen communities were funded through the grant to offer 1440 seats to at-risk families. Although state pre-K programs require bachelor degree certified teachers compensated on the same scale as kindergarten teachers, the state's education funding formula provides more state funding for kindergarten than the state provides for pre-K. Louisiana's primary state-funded pre-K program, LA 4, and its nonpublic pre-K program, NSECD, funds each seat for pre-K at \$4,580. Pre-K seats provided through the grant were funded at a per child rate of \$5,185, which is the state funding rate for a kindergarten seat. This is an important step toward funding quality, especially toward ensuring pre-K teachers are compensated equally with K-12 teachers. Grantees were funded an addition \$1,617.89 per seat to improve at least 130% seats in the site where the classrooms were located. This at a minimum must include job-embedded coaching to teachers. In Year 3, grantees exceeded their target, using funds to improve 2,029 seats. For Year 4, grantees will continue to be funded at a quality rate of \$5,185 per seat, with the additional \$1,617.89 per seat to improve at least 130% seats annually.

### 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

In Year 3, the Department partnered with sixteen subgrantees that represent both rural and urban communities from different areas of the state: Caddo, Calcasieu, City of Monroe (Ouachita), Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lincoln, Orleans, Plaquemines, Rapides, St. John, Tangipahoa and Union. In 2015, Louisiana fully implemented Act 3 through the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) policy Bulletin 140, which established a statewide network comprised of 65 local community networks across the state. Each local community formed a network, which is a consortium of all publicly-funded early childhood programs within that community: public and nonpublic Pre-K, Head Start, and child care centers receiving CCAP. For each community, BESE approves a Lead Agency to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations, which involves conducting two *CLASS™* observations for each classroom in all publicly-funded sites, and coordinated enrollment, which involves convening all publicly-funded providers to simplify enrollment processes for at-risk families. The Department works closely with each Lead Agency to support them to meet all expectations of Bulletin 140.

The sixteen subgrantees enjoy strong partnerships with the Department that were built over five years. The state has benefited from the experiences, feedback, and insight of these grantees since 2012 as this work has progressed from pilots to full implementation. In addition to providing support to the Lead Agencies around their accountability and enrollment support, the Department has additionally provided in-person and phone support, technical assistance, planning templates, and feedback specific to implementing the PreK Expansion Grant. This has included bi-weekly individual check-ins on implementation, monthly collaborative in-person or phone grantee meetings, and as necessary individualized follow up and support.

The Department partners with diverse communities, including the state's largest parishes like Orleans, East Baton Rouge, Calcasieu, Lafayette, Rapides, Caddo, and Ouachita, as well as some of the state's most rural parishes, including Union, Lincoln, Concordia, and Grant. Communities from the north, south, east, and west are all represented. Additionally, lower-performing communities that are considered high-needs parishes, including Concordia and Grant, were selected for the grant as opportunities to fund improvement aligned to the state's rating system and offer high-quality pre-K classroom options in those parishes. By partnering with these communities through this grant, the Department is increasing its connections with these communities in order to better support progress and improvement.

#### Progress by Topics

- 1) Roles and Responsibilities: The Department has provided templates, feedback, and support outlining the necessary criteria for subgrantees, including:
  - MOU and Assurance templates establishing expectations for providers, subgrantees, and the state regarding quality standards, data reporting, and other responsibilities;
  - Coordinated Enrollment Plans detailing how Lead Agencies will support families to enroll children in grant-funded seats, and how the seats will be incorporated into the Coordinated Enrollment Process;
  - Comprehensive Services and Improvement plans explaining how grantees will ensure access to comprehensive services through community partnerships and improve seats through job-embedded coaching and quality-aligned supports; and
  - Budget templates defining acceptable uses and categories for funds, which Lead Agencies use to plan

for their funds and submit for reimbursements.

- 2) Increasing organizational capacity and infrastructure of the subgrantee to provide high-quality pre-K programs: The Department supported subgrantees to offer grant-funded seats through diverse providers in myriad ways. These supports included:
  - Connecting programs in various communities to communicate about how best to structure these partnerships and learn lessons from Year 2 of the grant;
  - Collaborative sessions to support logistics and infrastructure to offer seats through partnerships; and
  - Example MOUs and diverse delivery guidance to support relationships between LEAs and child care centers.
- 3) Ensuring that each subgrantee minimizes local administrative costs: To ensure that Lead Agencies minimized local administrative costs, indirect costs were capped to their Department approved discounted rate and were only applied to the improvement funding component of the grant.
- 4) Monitoring Early Learning Providers: All programs with grant-funded seats are monitored through State Monitoring, with the same process and tools as other state-funded pre-K programs. Additionally, all programs with grant-funded seats reported attendance records through the same system as other state-funded pre-K programs.
- 5) Coordination of plans: The state has encouraged coordination across assessments, data sharing, instructional tools, family engagement, cross-sector and comprehensive service efforts, professional development, and workforce and leadership development through a number of efforts including:
  - Data on birth-5 assessment tool (Teaching Strategies *GOLD*) is reviewed by Department program consultants at the end of each checkpoint period;
  - All grant-funded classrooms are observed twice annually, with scores reported through the state *CLASS™* system and accessible to sites and Lead Agencies;
  - All sites with grant-funded classrooms are participating in the quality rating and improvement system that will assign a rating and provide clear, simple information on how programs are teaching and ways to improve;
  - Included in the profile data collection is a family survey, designed to monitor the perception of quality of communication, engagement, and services to families; and
  - Quarterly statewide collaboratives to support lead agencies and teacher leaders through state-facilitated sessions that provide technical assistance and opportunities for collaboration and coordination.
- 6) Coordination and delivery of high-quality pre-K programs: BESE Bulletin 140 requires all publicly-funded early childhood providers, including those funded through Title I, IDEA, Head Start, and CCDF, to coordinate enrollment and observations. Through this policy Louisiana is seeking to unify early childhood programs under high-standards and a quality rating and improvement system. The coordination of these services and programs by community network is required by law, and includes grant-funded sites and classrooms.
- 7) Integration of high-quality pre-K programs within diverse settings: The Department has encouraged and supported subgrantees to offer PreK Expansion Grant seats through mixed delivery in child care

settings that serve both at-risk and tuition paying families. In Year 3 of the grant, subgrantees have offered 50% of the seats in child care centers, supporting the integration of eligible children within economically diverse and inclusive settings. Additionally, subgrantees are encouraged to target improvements to the entire site or center, supporting these partnerships between LEAs and child care centers and furthering integration of at-risk children and families in inclusive settings.

8) Delivery of high-quality pre-K programs to children in need of additional supports: Across the state, Louisiana has been incredibly successful at working with early childhood providers to use federal funding to support inclusion practices, with each of the sixteen subgrantees providing inclusive settings. The state has increased the percentage of children with special needs receiving services in regular education programs from 36.5% (2004) to 87.5% (2013). In the Guidelines for LA 4 and NSECD programs, eligibility requirements indicate that programs cannot deny access, participation or funding to children on the basis of race, color, or national origin, gender or disability. PreK Expansion Grant seats are aligned to these requirements. To support these state pre-K providers, the Department designed and posted a brochure on [effective Early Childhood Inclusion practices](#). In addition, the Department has designed and posted [transition booklets](#) for communities to use as a guide to ensure timely transitions.

9) Family engagement: The state continues to work closely with subgrantees to implement effective communication and outreach strategies to:

- Increase enrollment of eligible children from isolated or hard-to-reach families through robust local coordinated enrollment efforts;
- Help families build protective factors through referrals to local community support organizations; and
- Develop the capacity of parents and families to support their children's learning and development.

Their efforts to coordinate enrollment includes implementing coordinated information campaigns designed to reach isolated or hard-to-reach families.

#### **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).

Louisiana is actively working to improve the alignment within the birth to third grade continuum. This process has begun with the state's multi-year effort to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented early childhood system that prepares only 54% of children for kindergarten, Louisiana passed a law (Act 3, 2012) to unify pre-K, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network. By empowering families with choice and ensuring easy access to high quality options, the state seeks to start every child on track for success. All publicly-funded sites in every community across the state received a performance rating and profile displaying the same informational metrics. This alignment in public information for birth to age-five programs will easily allow families to understand the differences between programs, and make a decision based on what makes the most sense for their family.

As a result of the unification of Louisiana's early childhood system, information about all program types and educational opportunities is accessed through the same public avenues, mainly the new Louisiana School and Center Finder, Louisiana Department of Education website, newsletters, and information phone numbers. Families are able to become familiar with the strategies to access information about their child's education, whether that is at a child care center, pre-K program, or elementary school.

Each region in Louisiana has a local community network, which are consortia of all publicly-funded early

childhood programs within that community: public and nonpublic pre-K, Head Start, and child care centers receiving CCAP. For each community, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approves a Lead Agency to fulfill the expectations for coordinated observations and coordinated enrollment. As part of coordinated enrollment, Lead Agencies develop a process to convening all publicly-funded providers to simplify enrollment processes for at-risk families. A key component of this is the Coordinated Information Campaign. Through the Coordinated Information Campaign, Lead Agencies work to inform families about the availability of publicly-funded early childhood care and education programs serving children four years of age or younger. Families then participate in a coordinated eligibility determination, coordinated application, and are finally matched based on preference. By promoting a coordinated community-wide application process for families, Louisiana's families have access to expanded choices and support in locating the best program to meet their needs.

Local community networks cover every geographical region of the state. This ensures that even the most geographically isolated locations have a local source of coordinated information across program types. Additionally, with the new School and Center Finder, the Department has developed an expanded consumer education website for families that are seeking information about programs in their region. Families now can easily access all provider information across programs from their own homes or computers.

As part of its multi-year effort to unify early childhood, Louisiana has created one statewide rating and improvement system for all publicly-funded early childhood programs. This system will help ensure every child has access to a classroom with high quality interactions and instructions, by using the research-based CLASS system as the primary measure and informing families of quality via individualized program profiles. For the first time, families and programs across the state are now able to measure and discuss quality for every provider in a consistent, developmentally appropriate, and rigorous manner. Through the performance profiles, the state provides information on quality, including both the CLASS measure and classroom best practices (e.g., use of aligned curriculum and assessment, ratios, teacher preparation) for each site and community network. The previous QRIS has fully transitioned to the new unified rating and improvement system. This coordinated and aligned rating system will ensure that all early learning programs in Louisiana are held to the same high standard, and that no program is able to detract services or access to another. Additionally, through the state's emphasis on completing observations locally, the 1,200 trained observers for the system includes many principals, who are now better able to recognize and support quality in early childhood classrooms.

All children participating in publicly-funded early learning programs have access to a teacher that is familiar with and can utilize Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards. These standards are aligned with the academic expectations for kindergarten. Eligible children that are attending high quality pre-K have access to curricula that prepare children to succeed as measured by the Early Learning Developmental Standards.

Louisiana is also developing and launching the beginnings of a Birth to Kindergarten Pathway for new teachers. The Birth to Kindergarten Pathway will promote articulation and credential achievements over time for teachers working in child care, Head Start, and pre-K settings. Louisiana has developed a Birth to Kindergarten Career Pathway that begins with an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and ends with a Birth to Kindergarten teaching license that can be used to work in the public school system. Through a series of stackable degrees and coursework, early childhood teachers that attend participating teacher preparation programs that offer the statewide curriculum will have the opportunity to build their credentials over time. Teachers that complete coursework that is offered by an approved teacher preparation program will be able to transfer courses between participating two and four year postsecondary institutions in order to build their professional education over time. Each of the degrees within the voluntary statewide curriculum is aligned to meet the requirement for the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate. The Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate is the teaching credential required for all lead teachers in publicly funded child care centers by 2019, and can be earned by successfully completing the foundational coursework for the statewide curriculum. Beginning in June 2018, all teachers will be expected to complete coursework for their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate at a higher education or private provide teacher preparation program that has been approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Through the requirement to complete coursework at a BESE-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program program, Louisiana will ensure that all child care teachers are receiving high-quality training and practice experience that prepares them with the competencies

required to excel in their jobs. To encourage the development of a diverse pool of high-quality early childhood teacher preparation programs, the Department has launched a grant opportunity entitled Believe and Prepare: Early Childhood. This competitive grant provides up to \$30,000 of startup funding to preparation programs that present high-quality proposals for designing and implementing teacher preparation coursework that is aligned with the Birth to Kindergarten Pathway. Through Believe and Prepare: Early Childhood, Louisiana has now approved 14 BESE-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program, with the expectation of approving six more this spring.

Louisiana provides support to ensure that curricula, professional development, and assessments are all aligned with state standards and all three are high quality. As an example, to help districts choose curricula, Louisiana provides online annotated reviews of infant/toddler, PreK and K-3 curriculum. Materials are rated on a three-point scale: Tier 1 exemplifies quality, Tier 2 is approaching quality and Tier 3 does not represent quality. All Tier 1 programs receive a state contract, which makes it easier for districts to procure them. When it comes to professional development, the state only recommends vendors that have made an explicit link between their offerings and curricula that's been rated Tier 1. The state also ensures assessments are strongly correlated and skills observed or measured build on one another so teachers can see children's developmental progress. The Department has completed curriculum reviews for over 35 early childhood curricula, and continues to review curricula submitted by districts and vendors to determine their alignment with quality indicators. The instructional materials and curriculums are extensively reviewed to ensure their alignment with Louisiana's Birth to Kindergarten Early Learning and Development Standards, which are directly aligned with the standards for students in Kindergarten. All program types are encouraged to select and implement a Tier 1 curriculum that is found to be of high-quality and is aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. For the past two years, the Department has offered the Child Care Curriculum Initiative, which supports every publicly-funded child care center in the state to purchase two high-quality curriculum kits by reimbursing 80% of the cost at a maximum of \$4,000. These purchases are accompanied by a Curriculum 101 training offered through local Resource and Referral agencies, to ensure that teachers are supported to use these materials in their classrooms to support high-quality instruction and interactions.

Louisiana also encourages alignment with in a birth-grade 3 continuum through its Striving Readers grant, which requires districts to provide support structures through feeder partnerships to ensure successful transitions for children between infant-toddler to preschool, preschool to Kindergarten, and kindergarten to grades K-3.

This year, the Department released [Louisiana's Pre-K through Third Grade Guidebook](#) to provide additional information about pre-K to grade three alignment. This guidebook provides site and system leaders with information and guidance on creating strong plans for their schools that ensure quality and continuity of proven practices across pre-K through third grade so children and families experience smooth and effective transitions, thrive in the early elementary years, and achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

Collaboration between pre-K and kindergarten teachers is promoted by the shared professional development events that take place four times a year at various statewide locations through a series of professional development entitled Teacher Leaders. Louisiana has four quarterly state approved and facilitated statewide training sessions called the Teacher Leader Collaboratives. The Teacher Leader Collaboratives are intended to bring together a selection of teacher's birth to 12 classrooms to complete sessions that provide opportunities to learn and practice new instructional strategies and participate in collaboration. These sessions promote connections between teachers from various backgrounds. In the spring, the Department hosts a large convention called the Teacher Leader Summit. At this convention, teachers from various age levels have an opportunity to participate in sessions, build connections, and discuss instructional strategies that are applicable to the age groups they share. At this event, teachers from Kindergarten and other early education grades can attend the same sessions as teachers working in PreK, Head Start, and child care.

## 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*.

Louisiana continues to make progress on meeting the state match described in its plan. The state is currently using non-federal money to support the community network activities, including coordinated observations and coordinated enrollment, by allocating these funds to Lead Agencies to support them to meet their requirements. The Department additionally uses non-federal funding to contract with a third party to conduct *CLASS™* observations and provide feedback to teachers to support improvement in interactions and instructions. The Department uses non-federal funds to support statewide access to *GOLD*, the statewide formative assessment in birth-to-five classrooms. Finally, the Department utilizes non-federal funding for state-level infrastructure to support the early childhood work occurring in the field. Through these endeavors, the Department is meeting the required state-level match to support implementation of Louisiana's ambitious and achievable plan.

### **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.

Louisiana is currently in a multi-year effort to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented early childhood system that prepares only 54% of children for kindergarten, Louisiana passed a law (Act 3, 2012) to unify pre-K, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network. The state's early childhood efforts support an early childhood continuum that begins at birth, including a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly-funded early childhood programs and a coordinated enrollment system serving all at-risk children birth-to-five. In fall 2017, every publicly-funded program received a performance rating and profile, released through Louisiana School and Center Finder, displaying the same informational metrics for each program type. This alignment in public information for birth to age-five programs will easily allow families to understand the differences between programs, and make a decision based on what makes the most sense for their family. This platform also includes information about K-12 schools, so families are seeking information about all birth-to-twelve programs in one place - creating a more seamless process for communities.

All subgrantees funded by the grant are observing all toddler classrooms in Early Head Start and child care centers accepting CCDF using the *CLASS™* tool, and are providing feedback and results to support improvement. Subgrantees have also included these programs in their coordinated enrollment process that includes a coordinated information campaign and a streamlined eligibility and application process for all at-risk families. In addition, the Department has begun a pilot of the Infant *CLASS* tool in around thirty classrooms across the state, to better understand the tool, the process to use the tool within a system, and how best to use the information provided by those observations to support improvement for infant teachers.

As part of the work to support communities in continued improvement and implementation across the birth-to-twelve spectrum, the Department releases an annual [District Planning Guide](#). The 2017-2018 District Planning Guide serves as the primary planning tool for LEAs in making academic and programmatic decisions for the upcoming school year, spanning early childhood through high school. The purpose of this tool is to guide planning conversations between LEAs and Department field support teams to reflect on this year's data

and implement necessary changes for 2017-2018, and highlight key planning decisions, available resources, and available funds for the upcoming year. This guide demonstrates the Department's commitment to support communities in birth-to-third grade planning and coordination.

In addition to these interventions, the Department has promoted an aligned birth-to-third grade pathway to quality and improvement through a number of initiatives, including a birth-to-twelfth grade curriculum review process, a birth-to-twelfth grade curriculum implementation scale, a Pre-K to Third Grade Guidebook, quarterly collaborative professional development opportunities, and an annual summit for teachers and leaders.

**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.

The state subgranted 97% of the grant in Year 3 to high-need communities. 76% of the grant funds were subgranted to create 1440 new PreK seats aligned to the state's pre-K program and meeting the definition of high-quality pre-K programs. 24% of the grant funds were subgranted to communities to support improvements to at least 130% of seats, or 1872 seats. All of the seats created by the grant met the structural elements of a high-quality program, including a bachelor degree, certified teacher, quality ratios of 10:1, high-quality professional development for all staff, a full-day program, and instructional staff salaries equivalent to local kindergarten teachers.

## 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.

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).

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.

The state is continuing to explore options to sustain service levels for eligible children to access high-quality pre-K programs in high-need communities. At the state level, BESE has identified priorities for additional early childhood funding to serve at-risk children through the funding model proposed to the state legislature, which was required by HCR 61. Locally, the state is partnering with subgrantees to develop plans for sustainability for new seats. In these plans, subgrantees will identify potential local and philanthropic funds that could be raised to sustain grant seats and support services.

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.

The state defines actual expenditures as the funds for which reimbursements have been requested and paid. Reimbursements are generally tracked by the state's fiscal year, but can be tracked by calendar year, and have been for the purpose of these reports. The state has allocated 97% of its Year 3 funds to subgrantees. These allocations last through the state's fiscal year, and subgrantees can submit for reimbursements at any point during the year. Additionally, subgrantees have not yet incurred all of their costs for the school year by the end of the calendar year. These two points explain the discrepancy between allocations to subgrantees and actual expenditures, or requests for reimbursements. The state plans to carry over these unexpended funds so that subgrantees are supported to offer these pre-K programs through the entire 2017-18 academic year.