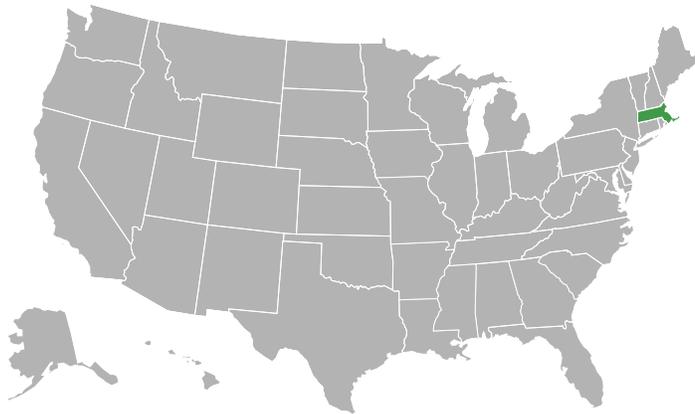


# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

## FY2017 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

# Massachusetts



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

3. Project Title: Massachusetts Preschool Expansion Grant

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

5. Grantee Address: 51 Sleeper St.

City: Boston State: Massachusetts Zip: 01776

6. Project Director Name: Jocelyn Bowne

Title: Director of Research and Preschool Expansion Administration

Phone #: (617) 988-2431 Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #: (617) 988-2451

Email Address: jocelyn.bowne@mass.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	\$15,850,326.48	\$5,990,076.00
b. Current Budget Period	\$15,180,775.69	\$5,990,076.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

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

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant?  Yes  No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government?  Yes  No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:
- Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: 07/01/2016 To: 06/30/2019
- 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: MA

PR/Award #: S419B150023

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

*“The staff at this program go way beyond for all the kids.*

*I would like to say how much this program not only changed my daughter's life but it changed my whole family.” PEG Parent Testimony*

*“For myself, the PEG program has given me an opportunity to grow as a person, as an educator, and as a professional. As a person, I have been able to buy my own home with my husband due to the pay increase that is involved with PEG. With this, I am now able to start the family I have been dreaming of for years, but never felt financially ready to start. I have fallen in love with the teaching field because I am able to see children grow every day and the love and support their families give to both their children and our teaching staff. I, personally, have never felt more respected as an educator and honored to say that I work in the PEG program.” PEG Teacher Testimony*

## Overview of Progress:

PEG funding has allowed the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to work with five communities, Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield, to build new partnerships and create new state funded prekindergarten openings in these communities. In each PEG community, the school department (LEA) and EEC-licensed early learning providers (ELPs) coordinate enrollment efforts. At the heart of Massachusetts' plan for the PEG was an effort to leverage local resources through public-private partnerships to develop high quality full-day full-year preschool programs with four primary agendas:

- Expand access to preschool for low income children who never before received any early education
- Create more integrated and aligned local systems of early education, birth to grade 3
- Develop the professionalism and skill of the early education workforce
- Build programs that are responsive to the needs of children and families
- Serve as a learning lab to use research to inform future policy decisions

In each of these areas, Massachusetts continues to make important strides and as well as identify additional goals for improvement.



## Expanded Access

During the two and a half years that programs funded by the Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) have been in operation, approximately 2400 children have been served. Of these children, about 1600 would likely have entered kindergarten without any early education experience, putting them at risk of starting school behind their peers. Sixty seven percent of these children had had no prior early education experiences, as a result of ineligibility for vouchers, a need for full time, rather than the half day program provided by the public school, or a lack of awareness of preschool opportunities. These are children who, without the support this grant provides, would have entered kindergarten this September without any preschool experience.

The results of child assessments conducted by Abt Associates as part of the program evaluation demonstrate the success that PEG has had in serving these children well.

- Across measures of English vocabulary, letter/ word recognition and math skills, PEG children showed significantly more growth than in the nationally representative sample (which includes children with early education experience) used to set assessment norms, and children ended the year with literacy and math skills on par with this sample, on average.
- The greatest gains were seen in English vocabulary growth. Children began the PEG program much farther below expected the expected skill level for English vocabulary than in other skills, a result reflective of the large numbers of dual language learners being served. The PEG program significantly closed the gap in vocabulary skills.
- Teachers also rated children in the PEG program at expected levels of social skills and behavior development across the PEG year, on average.

## Public-Private Partnerships in Service of Birth to Grade 3 Alignment

PEG funds have been invested in public-private partnerships to create new high quality full day, full year classrooms in the PEG communities. The grant funds 48 classrooms across the five communities, all of which are led by a teacher with at least a Bachelor's degree, paid a salary commensurate with the public school and with class sizes between 10 and 20 and child-teacher ratios of no more than 10:1, frequently closer to 6:1 when a three educator per classroom model is implemented to provide staffing for a full-day program. Each community has developed a steering committee comprised of representatives from the LEA and each ELP, which have continued the collaborative planning process begun when programs were being designed. As these groups have entered year three of the grant, attention has shifted from developing the program model to considering available data and reflecting on program experiences to identify opportunities for continued program improvements or more focused program alignment. During year 2 programs developed a clarity of focus for professional development and coaching, defined key family engagement and comprehensive service components, implemented more mature outreach and enrollment systems and considered ways to support kindergarten enrollment and communicate with kindergarten teachers. Opportunities to share resources and align services were identified and public school staff from various departments such as special education, enrollment and homeless services attended steering committee meetings to provide resources, support coordination and share expertise. As programs begin the third year of PEG, the relationship building and vision setting of year one have laid a foundation for more intensive efforts to look honestly at the strengths and weaknesses of the program and continue to plan creatively around program improvements. The following issues have been important points of consideration in all communities:

- Considering how to improve access to prekindergarten for all children locally and best integrate the PEG program into larger, somewhat fragmented, local systems of early education, including:
  - Organizing outreach to families not currently served by the early education system; and
  - Building a referral system, which in some cases leverages the public school kindergarten.

registration resources.

- Identifying key points of alignment to ensure a smooth transition to Kindergarten, including:
  - Determining how to align curriculum and develop shared expectations for kindergarten readiness;
  - Building opportunities for conversations between PEG teachers and kindergarten teachers about classroom structures and expectations;
  - Coordinating information sharing between PEG teachers, parents and kindergarten teachers about individual children; and
  - Supporting parents through the process of kindergarten enrollment and transition.
- Engaging in continuous quality improvement by reviewing program data and making responsive program adaptations.

### Stable and Professional Workforce

*“With the PEG teachers, there is no comparison to the other teachers, I have no worries with the PEG classrooms, teachers rock and they are organized and committed. They are professional.” PEG Director interview, Year 2*

PEG recognizes that teachers are the cornerstone of the program; it is the teachers' skill at organizing the classroom environment, implementing effective curriculum, engaging in responsive and intellectually stimulating teacher-child interactions and connecting with parents that creates a high quality program.

PEG programs have invested heavily in their educators, providing multiple professional learning opportunities, including coaching, and ensuring salaries are commensurate with the public school for lead teachers. Classrooms are often staffed with three teachers each to provide educators flexibility to engage in job-embedded professional development, ongoing planning and communication with families, as well as to lower child-teacher ratios for much of the day. In return for these investments, programs have hired educators with strong qualifications (all lead teachers have BAs and 23 percent have MAs) and expect high levels of engagement in the professional learning opportunities and other responsibilities outside the classroom, such as efforts to engage in meaningful ways with families.

The classroom quality results reflect the early return on these investments.

- In Year 1 and 2, PEG classrooms demonstrated strong levels of quality on two standardized observational measures, comparable to or better than other large scale early education programs.
- More significantly, these classrooms demonstrated growth in quality between Year 1 and 2 on two important dimensions of quality, classroom organization and emotional support. Measures of instructional quality showed early signs of growth as well, but these were not consistent across communities.

Classroom quality will continue to be measured each year of the PEG program to better understand the extent to which these investments in early educators pay off over time. In particular, the development of instructional skill is the most challenging area of growth for early education teachers and one that is increasingly a focus of PEG professional supports. Teacher retention will also be tracked, as high levels of retention are essential to ensuring that the professional investments pay off. Early reports from Year 3 suggest that three of the five communities have not seen any lead teacher turnover in the third year; an improvement over the 77 percent return rate seen in Year 2.

### Supports for Families

*“Por el horario del PEG pude conseguir mi primer trabajo, también tuve la oportunidad de trabajar.”*

The provision of comprehensive services and the engagement of families has been an aspect of the PEG design that programs have embraced; all but a few small providers in Boston have used PEG funds to hire one or more family engagement staff. At the same time, PEG programs acknowledged in year 1 that these efforts were not well coordinated across programs. In year 2, PEG programs were deeply committed to coordinating their efforts. Through the work conducted at a local level to define the family engagement supports and comprehensive services essential to serving local families well, a model for such service provision has developed which has been informed by the Head Start model, but adapted to the realities of the PEG programs.

- Most program have one staff person dedicated to this work. As extensive outreach has been necessary to enroll some of the harder to reach families, having staff to go door to door has been essential. These staff also coordinate home visits, events and case management, often serving as the first point of contact for families with the program.
- As part of this work with families, programs have used multiple opportunities to reiterate the importance of regular attendance. Comparison of attendance from Year 1, when the messaging was less well organized, to Year 2 shows improvements, as absentee rates have dropped from 9 to 7 percent (adjusted to allow 10 days vacation time across the year).
- Programs also report an increasing focus on building parent capacity, either through communication about the curriculum and home supports for children or other resources for parents, such as English classes or job skills training.
- Finally, programs report serving groups of families facing multiple challenges such as homelessness, job loss, isolation and mental health issues that require intensive intervention. Every program has powerful stories about the ways families have been connected to resources at a critical time in their lives.

### Role of Data and Evaluation

EEC and each PEG community have made a substantial financial commitment to the evaluation of these programs. Data on implementation, classroom quality and child outcomes have been collected by Abt Associates, the contracted research firm, during the first two years of the program. An impact evaluation of the second year is in process, as is a cost study. Abt Associates has provided the data to programs as it was collected, allowing for data driven decisions to take place throughout the year. As more detailed information about both growth in children's school readiness and classroom quality becomes available, the data has provided both affirmation of the success of the program and highlighted areas where closer attention needs to be paid. Information about PEG children's kindergarten success is now also becoming available and providing additional support for a review of program effectiveness. Data meetings with individual programs and the community leadership, facilitated by EEC staff, have begun and will continue with a focus in the winter of 2018 on child outcomes. As EEC looks ahead to sustaining lessons learned from the PEG programs, evaluation results are being considered by EEC leadership to inform ongoing policy decisions.

### Lessons Learned

#### *Serving Local Needs*

Extensive outreach has been necessary in most communities to locate and enroll families who have never before had access to early education programs. Although challenging, communities have found that when they worked together to coordinate their outreach, not only were they more successful, they also built their commitment as a team to serving the families of their community.

Efforts to support families through the transition to kindergarten, from early or streamlined



kindergarten enrollment to opportunities to visit kindergarten classrooms, have also been developed through the collaboration. PEG communities are creating opportunities for PEG and kindergarten teachers to share their practices and expectations for children, as well as pass on information about individual children, not a simple task when children from one PEG classroom disperse across a large urban school district. The ability to track children using public school identifiers has been essential in supporting these efforts.

### *Local Collaboration*

Leadership teams have been developed in each community, comprised of managers from all collaborating programs and facilitated by the local school district staff. Central to the success of these collaborations have been the clear structures and roles that have included the opportunities for collaboration at multiple levels of program staff. The public school PEG coordinators have played a critical role in facilitating these groups, managing the collaboration and ensuring that the shared vision and goals of the group organize the focus of the collaboration. Collaboration is not always an easy or smooth process; differences of mindsets and approaches to programming need to be negotiated, historic tensions resulting from prior negotiation over resources and governance need to be smoothed over and barriers resulting from fragmented funding streams and oversight structures overcome, particularly the very separate systems responsible of public education and early education. Some challenges have been overcome through these collaborations, but work remains to be done.

In particular, efforts to fully integrate special education students into PEG classrooms have been an ongoing concern. Despite a strong commitment from all partners to serving special education students well in community-based setting, concerns about ELP educator training have emerged. Public school special education staff worry that PEG teachers, who do not typically have a Masters in Special Education as is common in public school inclusion classrooms, do not have the necessary skills at differentiating instruction and implementing inclusive practices. Directors and teachers have also reported dissatisfaction with the training provided on these topics in year 1 and 2. PEG funds are now being used by the LEAs to develop more training and coaching to support PEG educators in using inclusive practices effectively. EEC is paying close attention to lessons learned from these efforts as it considers how to best allocate funds to support effective inclusion across the early education system.

### *High Quality Classrooms*

PEG programs have attended carefully to developing responsive systems of support for educators. The following essential characteristics of professional development have been identified by programs:

- Implementation of effective professional learning requires intensive planning and collaboration across partners and includes program directors, coaches and administrators.
- A clear, and well integrated focus for professional supports is necessary and all supports, including coaching and training should be aligned around this focus.
  - Formal classroom observation tools and a shared curriculum can both be a focus.
  - Professional learning opportunities should engage the full teaching team, when possible, to allow for consistent integration and ongoing support among the team.
  - Program leadership must also be involved in professional learning and must have clear roles in supporting the educators with implementation.
- Important features of professional learning include:
  - Well aligned trainings
  - Coaching that is inclusive of the whole teaching team
  - Planning time with supports for planning differentiation of instruction and integration of high quality teacher-child interactions.
  - Opportunities for collaboration among teachers
- In a program that is open for at least 8 hours and runs for the full year, staffing classrooms with three teachers has proven essential to allow the flexibility needed to implement the job embedded professional learning opportunities and to support the integration of high quality

practices in the classroom.

- Inclusion of children with special needs has required extensive coordination with public school staff to organize service provision and ensure PEG educators are familiar with the referral process and are supported in implementing accommodations.

Programs have also highlighted the essential role that the commensurate salaries play in allowing them to expect greater investment of teaching teams in their professional learning and expect higher levels of teacher retention.

### *Family Supports*

PEG programs invested a great deal of staff time and resources in support for families, including home visits, multiple family events, case management and targeted mental health and behavioral supports (both to children directly and to support teachers working with particular children and families). In addition to better defining the services and structures central to effective implementation of these services, as described above, programs recognized that coordination and capacity are essential. Having the resources to hire a staff member to coordinate and engage with this work is essential, but requires more than one PEG classroom per program to achieve a manageable economy of scale. Communities have also begun to share the coordination work, so that one program organizes vision screening, while another coordinates the dental screenings, thereby sharing the workload. When a program has an expertise in a particular area, such as the experience Community Teamwork has in managing a fleet of buses, additional resources have been allocated to that program to allow for centralization and more effective management of that service.

### *Looking ahead*

In Year 3 of PEG, communities are continuing to refine local models and are beginning to convene leadership at the local level to plan for sustainability of the PEG program once the federal funding stream ends. To further build capacity at the local level, EEC is offering professional learning opportunities to PEG educational and family support staff to drive continued quality improvement and build a network of support among grantees across the state. Continued support for better integration of special education students into community-based programs is also being provided through a collaboration between ESE and EEC.





**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: MA PR/Award #: S419B150023

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

**1. Project Objective**

**1(a) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant.** Describe the State's progress in meeting this Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure based on enrollment of Eligible Children in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant as of December 1, 2017.

PEG funding has allowed EEC to work with five communities, Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield, to build new partnerships and create new state funded prekindergarten openings in these communities. In each PEG community, the school department (LEA) and community-based early learning providers (ELPs) coordinate enrollment efforts. In year three of this grant, as of December 1st, EEC increased the number of eligible children enrolled in state supported prekindergarten to 763. This number does include some child turnover, but exceeds our target enrollment of 755 and EEC expects that enrollment will continue to increase over the course of the school year, due to continued outreach efforts by the subgrantees, as it has in past years.

Each PEG community manages their own enrollment, in some cases through the EEC-licensed providers and an others through centralized intake system in collaboration with the kindergarten enrollment offices. As the program matures, enrollment has become an ongoing process. Many children leave the program mid-year, leaving seats to be filled and programs have realized that early outreach and enrollment efforts in the spring are important for filling seats in the fall. Efforts to publicize the program have also been developed, such as a marketing campaign in Springfield, integration into the kindergarten information sessions in Holyoke, and the building of networks of referral partners in all communities, such as pediatricians, welcome centers and other trusted local supports. Now that two cohorts of children have completed the program and another is currently in place, a large network of parents is also spreading the word, often the most powerful source of referrals.

In four of the five communities, Boston being the exception, the PEG-funded openings were originally slated solely for children who have never received any formal early education, including family childcare, prior to enrolling in the PEG-funded classrooms. This decision followed from an analyses that identified large numbers of underserved children entering kindergarten in these communities. This has created some unexpected challenges in communities, the most salient one being the intensity of outreach efforts needed to recruit enough children to fill all the seats. All four of these communities continued to engage in extensive local outreach efforts. Local efforts included:

- Extensive door-to-door outreach - although time consuming, programs have consistently reported that person to person contacts are the most effective in recruiting families.
- The LEAs and ELPs collaborated in sending PEG staff to various community events to meet families face to face.

- Identification of local community organizations that were willing to collaborate in getting the message out to families.
- Surveying community leaders to develop a better understanding of where and how to locate particular groups of families that may have a history of disengagement from public education systems prior to kindergarten, such as particular immigrant communities. EEC's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) staff and local grantees provided, support to communities during the outreach process by consulting with the LEA and ELP leadership around outreach opportunities in the communities and using EEC activities, such as facilitated parent-child play groups, to get the word out to families about the program.
- Programs in Lowell determined that because they had one central site in the city, there were children who could not reach the program due to limited access to transportation. Targeted transportation was put in place to expand access to the program. One of the ELPs integrated the PEG children into transportation services they provided to their other programs, making the delivery cost effective. This agency also had a well-developed needs assessment process that was adopted by the PEG programs. This effort has been so successful that the program in Lowell opened with all seats full in the fall of 2016 and 2017 and has maintained enrollment over 98 percent despite high levels of turnover.
- Developing centralized systems for enrollment in PreK and Kindergarten opportunities as a joint collaboration between community based operators and the public schools. Family resource centers at the public school in three communities have provided a one stop shop for parents in understanding the availability of, and enrolling their children in early education programs. Consistent messaging around the centralized systems for families has been reported as an effective strategy to recruit families into the local early education programs, including PEG.

Despite these efforts, Holyoke and Springfield encountered continued challenges in enrolling children. Both communities identified many children with inconsistent histories of early education who were not enrolled in a program at the time of application to PEG and would be eligible if not for past episodes of infant/ toddler or preschool experience. Many of these children are homeless or involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), vulnerable populations that the state is committed to prioritizing. In response, EEC changed PEG eligibility requirements in Year 2 to allow programs to fill 20 percent of their slots with children who have had some prior early education experience but are not currently in a program and who are eligible for PEG in all other ways. In this way, the state continues to prioritize children who have not received formal early education services but allows programs flexibility to include other high needs groups. Parents are actively discouraged from jumping from program to program, but children with spotty early education experience are able to access the program. This change was made in November 2016 and will remain in place in year three and four. Programs continue to strive towards full enrollment and EEC will work closely to support and encourage their efforts.

In spite of these changes, Springfield PEG continued to experience challenges filling seats in the fall of 2017. A task force was convened to review past needs assessments, current enrollment data and conduct outreach with families across Springfield to understand their awareness of the program and early education choices. Needs assessments conducted in the spring of 2016 using state funds for sustainability and expansion planning, had identified barriers presented by the physical location of the program; Springfield covers a large geographical area and public transportation is inefficient. While underserved communities far from the current PEG program sites were identified, these families could not easily access the program as result of distances that would have to be traveled. Programs considered finding space in these neighborhoods and providing transportation, but a lack of appropriate space and the high cost of transportation led to a decision to focus attention on best serving the families in the geographic catchment of the programs. Programs also noted that they continue to see a large number of

the more transient families that led to an earlier change in eligibility requirements, but that this change was not sufficient to allow them to serve all such families. A review of enrollment data from September of the past three years highlighted the fact that Springfield programs were only able to fill 50 percent of their openings with children without prior experience, leaving other seats empty due to the state-mandated quota. Additionally, an influx of families relocating from Puerto Rico in the fall of 2017, created a new population of children with a strong need for early education, but who were potentially ineligible due to prior early education experience, as many had been eligible for public kindergarten in Puerto Rico (due to a later age cutoff). As a result, the decision was made in February 2018 to provide greater access to these vulnerable families; for Springfield the enrollment targets were changed to allow 50 percent of their openings to be filled with families with some prior early education experience, prioritizing those who are homeless, are in foster care, or have some DCF involvement.

In Boston, the extensive availability of early education programs for four year-olds led to the decision to integrate the grant funding with other funding sources, in an effort to expand the quality over the quantity of publicly funded openings available to children in the current programs. This decision allowed programs in Boston more flexibility to braid funding sources and, in some programs, serve children in mixed-income and mixed-age classrooms. Rather than building a program from scratch, as in the other four communities, with new classrooms and new program sites, Boston has focused on working with already existing classrooms and programs. Enrollment in the first three years has been a challenge across programs in Boston, although different programs have struggled in the different years. Inequities in funding and enrollment expectations (originally based on program's estimates of the number of children they could serve and the necessary funding) have been identified, which has led to reductions in some program's enrollment expectations to ensure adequate funding. In year two, Boston has served 262 children while programs have committed to 280 PEG-funded slots. In year 3, minimum enrollment expectations were reduced to 250 slots and programs have maintained 90% enrollment. Recently, Boston Mayor Walsh and Boston Public Schools (BPS) have made a commitment to provide universal prekindergarten to four year olds in Boston, and, although committed to using a mixed delivery system for this effort, BPS has increased the number of slots available for four year olds in BPS schools. Programs suspect that the increased availability of city funded seats may be partially responsible for reductions in enrollment seen the first three years of PEG. These programs have experienced high levels of turnover in the fall, as children who receive a seat in a BPS school of choice leave the PEG program. In year one, 14 percent of children enrolled had left as of December 1, while in year three the number has been halved but remains high at six percent, with most leaving for BPS. Because, BPS has a highly competitive lottery system in place to manage school choice, families feel that if they are offered a seat at a school of choice, they must take it or lose the opportunity to attend that school. The project manager at BPS has been supporting programs in a marketing effort and in coordinating enrollment efforts with BPS waitlist information, both to identify children interested in prekindergarten programs who are unlikely to receive a seat at a BPS run classroom and alert programs to children already enrolled are likely to receive a seat in the near future, and potentially leave the PEG program. Continued coordination between BPS and ELPs will be necessary to address the ongoing challenges in Boston. As BPS works with the mayor's office to develop a plan to provide universal prekindergarten in Boston through a mixed delivery system, PEG programs are in conversation with BPS to consider how these classrooms might be used to sustain PEG investments and pilot efforts to build greater coordination, such as defining the program's role as feeder schools into the BPS system. A pilot "connector system" is being tested between two PEG programs and BPS neighborhood schools in Year 3, whereby children in these programs are guaranteed a kindergarten seat at the connector school. Programs also have an opportunity to build close relationships with the staff at the connector school, and consider alignment issues on the local level. The results of this experiment will inform future efforts in the plans for universal prekindergarten in Boston.

Central to the success of each community in increasing enrollment and addressing enrollment challenges has been the collaboration between the public schools and EEC-licensed programs in planning and problem solving together. Collaborative decision making was a central expectation of

EEC for the five communities that were granted PEG funds. Each agency brings experience serving a group of families in the community, while the public school comes with a sense of obligation to all children in the municipality. Collectively, the management teams in each community, which are comprised of members from all partnering organizations, have been able to think creatively, pool resources and consider the needs of children and families systemically, informed by but not limited by each program's commitment to and experience with particular populations and regions in the city. EEC staff continue to be active participants in these meetings, bringing an understanding of state grants and policies, as well as the ability to help communities negotiate differences, encourage creative thinking and provide guidance on state regulations and policies. Enrollment challenges have served to force communities to reexamine their initial assumptions about the needs of families, and to develop more responsive efforts to serve the community as a whole.



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.*

EEC recognizes that the inclusion of children with disabilities is a priority and continues to consider the infrastructure development at the state and local level necessary to ensure that LEA and ELP partners identify the methods for inclusion that best meet the needs of children and families. Specific efforts to support full inclusion of Eligible Children with Disabilities in the High-Quality Preschool Program (HQPP) are underway. Due to challenges in the first two years of PEG in meeting the target for the number of children with identified disabilities (defined as a child with an Individual Education Plan or IEP with the local public school; Massachusetts has a slightly higher percentage than the national average at 6.9%), we are still working toward meeting the requirement (currently 2.4% have been identified as of December 1, 2017).

Potential barriers that were addressed in year two include the eligibility criteria of no prior preschool, the typical location for special education services in Massachusetts (most often provided in public school classrooms), and building the capacity of local preschool administrators and educators in community based settings to support inclusion. As communities work toward including additional children with IEPs in PEG classrooms, allocation of already stretched funding streams is a common challenge. Identifying sufficient resources in LEA budgets to provide required IEP services in community based settings requires problem solving at the state and local level, and remains a priority in year three.

Given this context it is important to note that in the summer of 2017, 5.5% (or 50 of 908) of children ever enrolled in the program during year 2 were reported as having an IEP. The upward trend in enrollment of children with identified special needs suggests that PEG communities, with some success, are engaging in effective strategies to enroll or identify children with varying needs in inclusive PEG classrooms.

Informed by lessons learned from the first years of PEG and planning for implementation in year three, EEC continues to address this priority through a multi-pronged approach.

Eligibility Policy for Children with Disabilities

As described in the previous narrative section, EEC continues to prioritize the enrollment of children with little to no prior preschool experience in its PEG programs. The decision to prioritize children with no prior preschool experience, in part, contributed to the lower number of children with identified disabilities due to the fact that many children with identified special needs have been potentially supported through an inclusion classroom when they were three, making them ineligible for PEG during their prekindergarten year. Grantee communities report strong collaboration and coordination between early intervention service providers and the public school, allowing them to successfully meet the needs of many children well before their prekindergarten year. Due to challenges in meeting the target for the number of children with identified disabilities enrolled in year one of PEG, eligibility criteria for children in this population is less rigid in year two and three, allowing for children with identified special needs to enter the PEG program regardless of their prior preschool experience. In some cases, this led to the referral of some children with IEPs to the PEG classroom, and grantee communities are thoughtfully planning around the appropriateness of the placement, and the role of supplemental comprehensive services in meeting the needs of the child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the PEG classroom.

### Screening and Evaluation

At the beginning of the PEG program year, much time is spent getting to know the children as they transition into a formal preschool program for the first time, while working closely with families through home visits and family engagement activities at the program level. In the first months of PEG programming, programs are conducting developmental screening, identifying individual needs of children, while making determinations about the need to refer them for a formal special education evaluation by the local school district. In Lawrence, ELPs are also conducting English Language screenings during the first few months of the program year, therefore identifying children who may need additional language support as they enter kindergarten. As children are being screened in the first few months of the program year, educators, program administrators and public school staff, including directors of special education, along with other PEG funded comprehensive service providers/teams (e.g., speech pathologists, occupational therapists, mental health consultants, and physical therapists) are working collaboratively to determine the appropriate next steps for the child. The time it takes to screen children, refer a child for an evaluation by the public schools, and potentially be identified with a special need can be months from the beginning of the program year.

### Targeted Family Engagement and Comprehensive Services

As outreach and enrollment efforts continue, LEAs and ELPs are expected to work with IEP teams, including families, to talk about the benefits of enrolling in PEG classrooms when determining the least restrictive environment for the child. Conversations continue about how to serve children receiving IEP services in PEG classrooms at the ELP sites; however, in many cases talking with families about the benefits of the PEG classrooms has been a critical component of the outreach conducted by all five communities.

Comprehensive services in PEG classrooms are very beneficial for all children, including those with identified disabilities. Many communities plan for comprehensive services based on the needs in their community, and ensure that children and families, including children with disabilities, have access to the many important supports that can strengthen a child's development and learning, including health, mental health, speech therapy, occupational therapy (OT), and physical therapy (PT). These services are increasingly being offered as full enrollment is attained and the needs of children are being identified. Comprehensive services such as OT, PT and speech have the potential to proactively respond to children who may be behind developmentally and may serve to avoid referral to special education. Whether a child currently has an IEP, has been referred to special education for an evaluation, or is being observed to determine whether a referral is necessary, these comprehensive services are critical to better understand where a child is in his/her development and to ensure that time

to support development and learning is not lost during the referral and eligibility determination processes.

In year two, all PEG communities planned for more intensive and targeted comprehensive services, and more consistently provided access to services such as mental health consultation, occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy. This intensive model for comprehensive services is being maintained in the third year of the grant. The communities' extensive outreach to hard-to-reach families has been successful in identifying children who are in need of supports, including children who are experiencing homelessness, trauma and other potentially toxic stressors. Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of these comprehensive services will support the children to make progress and ultimately, result in fewer referrals to special education. Mental health services and services that support a child's social and emotional well-being are a high priority for the PEG classrooms. For example, Springfield, Lowell, and one ELP in Lawrence hired a mental and behavioral health specialist in order to be able to provide mental health services onsite; other communities are planning and/or referring children and families to community-based organizations to meet their needs.

#### Coordination Between LEAs and ELPs

As inclusion continues to be a priority focus in year two, planning for strategies to support inclusion have prompted local PEG administrators at the LEA and ELP level to engage educators and other PEG staff to gain a better understanding of where there might be opportunities to enhance coordination between LEAs and ELPs. Additionally, these conversations have also addressed the capacity and needs of PEG educators and other PEG staff that play a role in supporting inclusive practices and policies.

There has been much progress toward the goal of enhancing coordination between LEAs and ELPs. In Lowell, Springfield and Holyoke, PEG communities reported the complex referral and IEP process is not clear to some staff. In response, ELPs invited LEA special education staff to provide training and orientations around the referral process, and continue to plan for the provision of administrative support in this process. In Lawrence, the LEA is implementing a standardized form that will outline established process guidelines for referrals. One ELP in Lawrence, and the programs in Holyoke, are ensuring program staff have been identified who are responsible for coordinating all special education related services, from the screening and referral process to providing support to families. Lowell plans to develop guidance to providers to support consistent messaging around the importance of inclusion. Holyoke has student support team meetings at each school in the district to better coordinate special education services for all children, and invites local PEG ELP partners to participate. Lawrence has created an inclusion task force, facilitated by the PEG coordinator at the district, that convenes public school staff and community based partners to network and plan for professional development supports around inclusion more broadly in the community. Springfield programs have received support from SPS special education staff in understanding the referral process and efforts are in place to develop a team review process to discuss children demonstrating issues, shepherd the process of identifying and trying different in classroom supports and determining when a referral is warranted. Generally, LEAs are working with their ELP partners to participate in the IEP process and provide some consultation to educators around accommodations to meet the needs of individual children.

#### Educator Preparedness

PEG communities report variation in the capacity of educators to support children with diverse learning needs, including those with IEPs. The complex nature of supporting all children, especially those with IEPs, is often a challenge, especially considering curriculum/instruction, supporting dual language acquisition, and social-emotional support for children. Adapting and modifying curriculum and implementing effective instructional strategies to support all children, while providing appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities, requires that educators and instructional leaders have a strong foundational knowledge in child development, curriculum and instruction while also having a

strong understanding of the IEP, including how to implement its goals, accommodations and service delivery plan. Additionally, educators must have the ability to successfully implement their knowledge through effective inclusive practices. Across the state, grantees report the need to design and offer professional learning opportunities for PEG educators and administrators to build their competencies around supporting inclusive practices. In response to this, PEG communities are planning for joint professional development and thinking about the role of coaching to support these efforts. EEC is intentionally providing local flexibility to address this need in a way that meets the needs in the local context, while also encouraging collaboration with the public schools and leveraging existing resources. Two PEG communities have funded a position to serve as an inclusion specialist to support educators' capacity around inclusive practices. EEC is engaging in planning for statewide professional development to support inclusive practices that will be informed by PEG grantees and feedback from other EEC grantees through various workforce initiatives. Considerations for how coaching provided within PEG classrooms can support inclusion is also being addressed at the state and local level.

#### Examination of Service Delivery Models and Planning for Implementation

PEG communities continue to work toward creating more inclusive PEG classrooms and are working at the local level to identify ways in which PEG classrooms are included in the options of least restrictive settings for children with IEPs as placement for next year's IEP services are determined. In PEG communities, special education services are typically provided in an inclusive, public school setting. Some LEAs are reporting the need to partner more closely with community based operators to serve as inclusion classrooms in order for the IEP teams to more fully explore the least restrictive options available to a preschool child with an IEP.

Enhanced coordination between LEAs and ELPs is proving to create movement toward the goal of improved inclusive preschool opportunities in PEG classrooms. Springfield has PEG classrooms co-located with public school classrooms with onsite speech, OT and PT service providers, and offer PEG children with these IEP related services in the PEG classroom. Given that the public school special education staff work with the public preschool classrooms, this model of co-locating classrooms has provided an opportunity to optimize expenses related to serving children with disabilities as the staff can work together across public and community-based programs to directly deliver early childhood special education services, provide consultation services with ELP staff and/or to work together to proactively address the healthy growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

#### Building State and Local Capacity to Support Effective Models of Inclusion and Professional Development

At the state level, the 619 coordinator, Head Start State Collaboration Office, PEG staff, staff from EEC's Workforce and Family and Community Supports Unit are working together to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. PEG grantee communities (including LEA PEG coordinators, ELPs, Head Start disability coordinators and public school early childhood special education staff), as well as other communities with Head Start grantees, continue to participate in a professional development and networking opportunity called *Building Inclusive Communities in Early Childhood*. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan focused on inclusion with communities came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed. Through this initiative, PEG communities are provided a platform to network, plan joint professional development, and discuss models for service delivery along with other communities across the Commonwealth working towards the same goal of strengthening inclusive practices.

Building on a statewide meeting of PEG grantees in April 2016 to discuss inclusion, members of the state team facilitated conversations at the local level in three PEG communities in the fall of 2016. The

purpose of these meetings was to identify strengths, challenges and potential solutions for models of inclusion and professional development. Local meetings included PEG LEA and ELP partners, special education directors, Head Start disability coordinators, and other relevant community partners. The initial meeting for the *Building Inclusive Communities* series was offered in October 2016, where communities were provided information from the joint policy statement around inclusion from The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the US Department of Education (DOE), as well as resources from the *Preschool Inclusion Toolbox* resource. Action plans were developed and the Workforce Development Specialist conducted follow up and continues to provide technical assistance related to their plans. A webinar opportunity to discuss statewide progress occurred in January 2017, and another in-person meeting was offered in March 2017 to continue these efforts. In year 3, the state partners developed a steering committee to help guide the continuation of this work. The steering committee includes both state and local staff focused on inclusion. With the guidance of the steering committee, the continuation of this series includes web-based and an in person convening of community based teams to support inclusion priorities. The first statewide convening will take place on March 28, 2018.

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

Central to the design of the PEG program was attention to capacity building at the local level. The intent of the PEG expectations has been to leverage local experience and organizational capacity to build on and integrate current systems, public and private, moving towards a more coordinated prekindergarten system at the community level. The following design factors have been critical to PEG success in expanding access to high quality programs:

- The grant funding was distributed to collaborations rather than individual providers, allowing each community to create a new system that built on the strengths of existing programs. Head Start grantees are represented in each community and bring their experience providing high quality services to family and children. Programs licensed by EEC and who have a long history of serving children receiving EEC subsidies have also played a central role. These programs are familiar with EEC requirements, have experience meeting the needs of low income families and providing early education services in each of these communities. Finally, the public school district serves as the LEA in each community and brings an understanding of the elementary and secondary educational system that children receiving PEG-funded programming will enter. The public schools are well situated to support community-wide alignment and alignment between the PEG model and public school programs.
- As the PEG-funded programs have been developed, EEC has relied on existing policies, while prioritizing a family-friendly approach that focuses on ensuring children's needs are met. At the foundation of the PEG model are the private, licensed programs providing services. EEC licensing regulations are some of the most stringent in the nation and ensure that children are in safe and developmentally appropriate environments. PEG programs are all required to participate in the Commonwealth's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), to ensure continuing quality improvement. Attendance is also being tracked, as it is in the subsidy system. However, in PEG programs the expectation is that programs will work with the families in ways that support positive child and family outcomes. For example, if children demonstrate chronic absenteeism, the program is expected to identify the barriers for families and support change, rather than expel families for poor attendance, as required by the subsidy system. In year two, PEG programs built strong messages about the importance of attendance into recruitment materials, parent handbooks and ongoing parent communications. Programs report fewer chronic attendance issues and better overall attendance. In year one, the average attendance rate was 86 percent while in year two and three it has risen to 89 percent.
- Efforts have been made to consider the alignment of EEC policies through the implementation process, both by ensuring that PEG requirements were aligned with current policies and identifying challenges at the program level in implementing policies. For example, PEG requirements are well aligned with the Commonwealth's licensing requirements; class size and child-teacher ratio requirements are already required by licensing, for example. EEC staff are also working closely with PEG programs to integrate the various requirements these programs face. EEC's Workforce Specialist is working with programs to identify the professional development requirements of the QRIS system, discuss each communities' vision for professional development and determine a coherent plan to meet all these needs with the time available. As the communities have collaborated more extensively on creating aligned professional development plans, EEC has noticed that their professional

development expectations have exceeded those incorporated in the QRIS system.

- The monitoring process developed for PEG programs has also played an important role in ensuring that access is available to high quality programs in the five PEG communities and communities are working flexibly to build a strong program. Monitoring protocols have been developed to assess both programmatic and fiscal compliance and technical assistance was provided by EEC to the LEAs in the fall of year one. EEC now monitors the LEAs, who monitor the ELPs and processes are well established.
- Meetings of regional monitoring teams, including all EEC staff with contacts with these programs, have also begun and will meet twice a year to discuss PEG programs. Issues are shared with the PEG director as they arise. This group includes EEC staff at the local level including licensors, QRIS quality specialists, and the Regional Directors. Again, this model builds upon EEC's infrastructure while focusing it in a new way. EEC has considered building on this model to provide this type of a review to other programs receiving significant amounts of EEC funding through multiple funding streams.

The management of the PEG program has also focused on ensuring that existing resources are leveraged and necessary capacity building is available. EEC PEG-funded staff regularly attend local planning and implementation committee meetings. Through such frequent attendance, EEC staff have built a deep understanding of each community, while being available to respond quickly to questions about the design of the program as they have arisen. In some cases, issues can be quickly addressed at the meetings, while others require EEC staff to bring questions back for consideration. In these instances, due to the placement of the PEG director as a direct report to the Deputy Commissioner of Program Administration, EEC is able to provide a quick responses to questions as they arise, ensuring that communities' planning and implementation are not impeded.

To support ongoing attention to quality at the local level, EEC provides multiple opportunities for PEG grantees to share information and receive technical assistance on different components of the grant. State-wide meetings took place two times in 2017 and focused on a variety of topics including sustainability and interpreting the PEG evaluation data. Opportunities for cross-state planning and community level planning are included in all meetings.

The evaluation of the PEG programs being conducted in collaboration with Abt Associates and the University of Massachusetts Boston has also provided important feedback to support quality improvement efforts. During data collection, Abt has provided data in an ongoing manner on classroom quality, program implementation, teacher and parent experiences and child assessment results to programs. This feedback loop has allowed programs to make mid-course adjustments and respond quickly to issues being raised by the data collected. The programs also provided important feedback to EEC and Abt about the usefulness of different measures for informing program decisions, feedback which has shaped the evaluation design in year two and three. A full report on the year one findings was provided to EEC in the fall of 2016, a presentation of these findings was made to the EEC Board and they have been reported to the state legislature. Year two implementations findings are being reported to the legislature in February and impact and cost study results will be available in April, and reported to EEC's Board at that time. Overall, Abt's reports have concluded that PEG programs have shown good success in achieving the primary goals of this program, building collaboration locally between early education private providers and public school districts, creating high quality and supportive prekindergarten programs staffed by highly qualified and well compensated educators and expanding access to such opportunities to children likely to enter kindergarten without prior early education experiences and supporting their school readiness. Classroom observations revealed moderate to high levels of quality, on average, across different dimensions of quality, and growth in two important domains of quality, emotional support and classroom organization, with some evidence of inconsistent growth in instructional quality. As a result, programs have focused the professional

development supports provided, particularly coaching, around instructional quality. Across measures of English vocabulary and letter/ word recognition skills, PEG children showed significantly more growth than in a nationally representative sample. The greatest gains were seen in English vocabulary growth. Children began the PEG program much farther below expected the expected skill level for English vocabulary than in other skills, a result reflective of the large numbers of dual language learners being served. The PEG program significantly closed the gap in vocabulary skills. The children ended the year with literacy, math and social and behavioral skills on par with a national sample, on average. Programs will continue to consider these results in Year 3, with particular attention to the variation in progress that was also seen; while improvements were seen for most of the sample, subgroups of children (10-20 percent) have still fallen behind.

In support of preschool expansion efforts, the state legislature has made grants available in the first three years of the PEG program for communities to plan for continued expansion of publicly funded preschool. These grants were available to all communities in the Commonwealth, including the PEG subgrantees, and supported needs assessment work, strategic planning and the identification of local resources. Grantees were required to build collaborations between public schools and local EEC-licensed programs and address all of the high quality elements required by PEG in their plans. Not only have these planning grants laid the groundwork for expansion beyond the PEG subgrantees, if funds are available, they also supported continued strategic planning and needs assessment in the PEG communities.

In the review of the past two years of planning grants, communities have clearly expressed the need for expansion of access to prekindergarten seats, noting large numbers of children entering kindergarten without any prior early education experiences and detailing the cost and logistical barriers to families to accessing these programs. Local collaborations in support of the expansion and alignment of early education opportunities have resulted in thoughtful plans for high quality programming. It is clear that while some alignment can be developed within current funding levels, the full implementation of these plans to expand access require additional funds.

**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.

A full 100 percent of PEG funding at EEC is dedicated to increasing the quantity of state-funded preschool through private, EEC-licensed providers, due to the fact that there is currently no state-funded prekindergarten in EEC's budget. Funds for public preschool administered by ESE are described below. All state funds disbursed by EEC are focused on improving the quality of the licensed programs already in the system, i.e. Universal prekindergarten (UPK), Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (IPLE) grants, QRIS improvement grants, Educator Provider Support (EPS) grants, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grants, Head Start Supplemental and Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) grants all increase the availability of resources to support quality in EEC licensed programs. The only public funding that is targeted at financing the full costs of providing early education services in private providers in Massachusetts comes from federal funds through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) provides Chapter 70 funding to public school districts to ensure parity in education spending across districts. The numbers of four year olds served in public school prekindergarten programming is accounted for in the formula that allocates funding across districts, primarily directed at services to children with identified special needs in

inclusive classrooms. The PEG funds support private, EEC-licensed providers in expanding access to programs outside of those run directly by public schools. The PEG design then includes public school districts as key players in local design supporting better integration of these two systems. As a result, there is a great deal of interest in learning from the implementation of the PEG model about how best to develop a more integrated and more robustly funded system through the combination of local, state and federally funded resources.

Through PEG funding, the number of eligible children enrolled in state supported prekindergarten increased to 763. An additional 25 percent of eligible children in the five communities served by PEG have had access to prekindergarten as a result of the grant. Of these children, 67 percent had never before attended any formal early education program, suggesting that the extensive outreach conducted has engaged children who would have otherwise gone to kindergarten without any formal early education. The state has reached our target enrollment of 755 and expects that enrollment will continue to increase over the course of the school year, due to continued outreach efforts by the subgrantees.

Because of the expectation that PEG communities will integrate systems and programs across public schools and community-based providers, communities are thinking carefully about how resources and funding streams could be best knit together into a coherent and effective system for providing free public prekindergarten to all eligible children in PEG communities. In particular, as we reach the halfway point in the PEG funding, local sustainability conversations are continuing in earnest. All five PEG communities have taken advantage of the state's preschool planning funds to support these efforts, and Boston has been engaged in a planning process with the Mayor's office. As the PEG communities consider how they might blend funding streams, the following issues are being considered:

- Exploring ways to use Chapter 70 funding can be used to support prekindergarten programs in a public-private delivery system.
- Using Head Start funding to provide Head Start's comprehensive services to all PEG children who would be eligible but are not being served in a Head Start program.
- Developing more centralized enrollment procedures that support eligible families in identifying the best program for their family and child from the full set of possibilities available in the community. Two communities currently have centralized the enrollment processes at the public school kindergarten registration offices and provide referrals to all free, publically funded programs in the community, including support in understanding eligibility requirements. At the same time, public schools do not typically have relationships with the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies that manage subsidy enrollment, so full information is not yet available. In three other communities, there is recognition that programs have strong connections to the community, and therefore the first point of contact is the program, as families are often familiar with the agencies and seek out information there. In these communities, careful attention has been paid to information sharing about all PEG programs.
- A subtext throughout all these discussions is a question of who "owns" the responsibility for children served through a collaboration like PEG. The programs directly serving the children are licensed by EEC. Ultimately, each program is therefore legally responsible for the services they provide and EEC is the authority deeming them competent to provide such services. Yet there are many opportunities for the collaborative provision of services which raise questions about how responsibility is delegated when multiple organizations are together serving one child. EEC has worked closely with programs to identify how staff working directly with children might be shared across multiple programs. Additionally, the needs assessments conducted in all communities and the efforts to think strategically about

enrollment have built a stronger sense of community responsibility in these collaborations.

Support for planning next steps for sustainability of PEG programs after the federal funding stream ends continues across the Commonwealth. In the spring of 2017, EEC PEG staff partnered with the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) to offer a statewide meeting to PEG grantees to discuss findings from the evaluation of the PEG program and offer an introduction to the Cost of Quality tool developed by CEELO. In combination, these two topics sparked discussion and planning around visions for sustainability at the community level, and created a network among current grantees to engage in this thinking. Following the statewide meeting, grantees met via a web based platform to discuss progress toward their sustainability planning. EEC staff, including the Commissioner of EEC, are meeting in early 2018 with each grantee community to discuss options for sustainability. Attendees from each community include the Superintendent of the public schools, LEA and ELP PEG staff, as well as other community stakeholders such as school board members, city mayors and legislative staff.

The state legislature and public discourse in Massachusetts have also remained focused on how access to high quality prekindergarten might be expanded. The legislature continued funding of the preschool planning grants in year two of PEG, which will be focused on planning for sustainability of preschool programming. A recent press release announcing the report to the legislature about the year one evaluation findings has received some good coverage in news outlets across the state. The PEG programs continue to serve the important role of demonstrating how high quality preschool can be provided through public-private partnerships, and the successes and lessons learned from year one and two are receiving broad attention.

**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.

### Overview

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

In determining the tools to use in identifying the school readiness of children served by PEG funded programs, EEC has taken a two pronged approach. We have drawn on the experience with the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) initiative and are also leveraging the data that we are receiving from the evaluation of the PEG programs.

### GOLD by Teaching Strategies©

Massachusetts KEA utilized the GOLD tool, published by Teaching Strategies (TS GOLD). With the

exception of a few districts that used the Work Sampling System, TS GOLD was used in kindergarten in districts that received the state's Quality Full-Day Kindergarten grant. PEG programs were aligned with this effort and required to use the same tool. Unfortunately, the legislature's elimination of the Full-Day Kindergarten grant from the FY17 budget led to a reduced use of TS GOLD in kindergarten classrooms. The checkpoints reported by programs at the end of the PEG program now provide the only opportunity to use this tool to assess kindergarten readiness. This checkpoint information is available to the state and could be analyzed to understand the Kindergarten readiness of PEG children.

As the state continues to consider the use of the TS GOLD tool, a commitment to supporting formative assessment remains. One challenge reported with the MKEA was that the acronym led to an erroneous expectation that the initiative was focused on identifying a student's competencies at entry to kindergarten only, instead of reflecting a formative assessment framework that was designed to measure a child's progress and inform instruction over time. The provision of professional development on formative assessment as well as reframing and evolving the initiative in this space (e.g., *Formative Assessment of Young Children: Improving Teaching and Learning in the Early Grades through Observation*) to more accurately reflect the goals that we are proposing through the state's joint position statement on assessment in the early grades (in progress) would help to strengthen assessment practices.

In PEG programs, extensive professional development in the use of formative assessment is required as part of QRIS participation and is ongoing in all communities. Statewide meetings of grantees have included technical assistance on using data, including assessment data, to improve program quality. The spring/summer TS GOLD checkpoint data provides a broad overview of children's development at the end of the prekindergarten year across all domains of development. At the same, consultation with the developers of the tool raised questions about its utility in providing a final determination on children's kindergarten readiness. Although benchmarks against age expectations could be identified for each of the domains measured, the tool was not developed to provide an overall assessment of kindergarten readiness using data from all domains. Additionally, EEC wants to be sure that programs remain committed to using this tool for formative assessment and focus attention on how the information gathered over time can inform instruction. The lesson learned from MKEA about the ease with which the focus on formative assessment can be lost have been taken to heart. EEC does not require teachers establish reliability in using the tool, leading to concerns about the consistency of the data quality. Finally, EEC has access to scores in each TS GOLD domain, but does not have the ability to link individual level data to the database of PEG children, limiting our ability to disaggregate data by child characteristics. As result, TS GOLD remains an important tool for the purposes of ensuring teachers are attending to the kindergarten readiness of the children they teach, but may not be the most effective tool for the purposes of state reporting.

#### PEG Evaluation Assessment Tools

The Abt evaluation provides a different type of data that could be used to assess kindergarten readiness, the results of standardized assessments administered by trained assessors with a representative sample of children for the purpose of identifying children's skills at a particular point in time. These results are far more likely to be reliable and valid indicators of children's kindergarten readiness, although challenges remain in integrating the results across measures and determining clear cut points. EEC also owns the data that Abt gathers and can therefore link the evaluation assessment data to child specific information in state data systems, using the State Assigned Student Identification (SASID) assigned to each child when they enter the PEG program. This SASID has also facilitated efforts to gather data on the child's progress in elementary school. As the data is held at the child level and can be linked to other data sources, data can be disaggregated by program or other child characteristics as necessary. However, this data is only drawn from the sample of children attending PEG programs and is a temporary data source. While this is the best tool currently available for state reporting on school readiness of children generally in the PEG programs, EEC is considering lessons learned and

implications for future assessment expectations of children in prekindergarten and determining a sustainable approach that might be piloted in Year 4.

### Data and Usage

EEC will consider the lessons learned from the data derived from the assessment tools used as part of the evaluation, and the process of using an external evaluator to collect data on a sample of children, as a way to identify the overall performance of children in a state funded program.

For the purposes of reporting on school readiness in year three of the PEG program, EEC has decided to use the results of one of the assessments used by Abt Associates, the Woodcock-Johnson, which included the scale evaluating mathematical understandings (applied problems) and letter identification (letter-word). This tool has the advantage of focusing on two key academic domains that are known to correlate with later school success. The sample of children assessed was identified by randomly selecting children (six or more) in each PEG classroom to test and therefore, provides a reasonable representation of the PEG program as a whole. Because this tool is normed, the standardized scores can be used to identify a range of performance that is within the range expected of children of the same age, thereby identify the number of children whose skills lag far enough behind their age mates to put them at risk. Children had to have a score of 85 or higher on both scales to be considered ready for kindergarten (reflecting the achievement of 84 percent of children in the normed sample); 79 percent of children in PEG evaluated fell in this range, suggesting the skills of PEG children are roughly comparable to the normed sample. Mean scores in the PEG sample were close to 100 (99.2 on both measures), the standardized mean score (based on the performance of a nationally representative norming sample of children). Given the large percentages of English language learners, recent immigrants and very low income children serve by PEG programs, groups who often lag behind their peers, these results are promising. Comparison of fall to spring scores on these standardized measures demonstrate growth in skills slightly above and beyond that expected based on the performance of the norming sample, demonstrated by a small increase in standardized scores of 1-2 points (a statistically significant change for early literacy skills). Additionally, vocabulary results showed significant growth in standardized scores from 87.9 to 94.8. Although children in PEG did not, on average, demonstrate vocabulary skills comparable to the norming sample, the gap in skills narrowed significantly during the PEG year. When these results were disaggregated by home language, both children who speak English at home and those who reported another first language showed significant growth but English speakers finished the year with normative skills, on average (mean scores of 95 in the fall and 100 at end of PEG), while dual language learners showed greater growth, but still demonstrated skill levels below the norms at the end of PEG (mean scores of 75 in the fall and 87 at end of PEG),

The social-emotional development of the evaluation sample was also assessed using the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), a standardized questionnaire used by teachers to rate the frequency of social skills and problem behaviors in the fall and spring of the PEG program. Overall, children showed normative social skills (mean score of 100) and slightly below normative levels of behavior problems (mean score of 97, lower scores reflecting fewer behavior problems), on average in the spring of the PEG program. These scores were relatively stable over the course of the PEG year.

The child outcomes results have just become available to programs, but plans are in place to hold data meetings with individual programs and community teams to review the data and consider the implications for program improvements. It is important to recognize that while these scores show positive growth in skills, on average, there remain small groups of children who are not showing the same levels of growth as their peers. Forty percent of the children for whom Spanish is a first language showed consistently low levels of English vocabulary across the PEG year, while only 11 percent of English speakers showed a similar trend. For literacy and math skills, 16 and 11 percent of children showed similarly small levels of growth. In the social-emotional domain, 12 percent of children showed consistently high levels of problem behaviors in the fall and spring, and a similarly sized group

(although represented by different children) showed lower levels of social skills across the year. Attention in the rest of Year 3 and Year 4 should be placed on identifying program improvements that will better support these children's development. Additionally, kindergarten assessment data on prior years PEG children is now available from the public school district and attendance, disciplinary and special education data is forthcoming from DESE, allowing programs to also consider the extent to which children's ongoing school success has been well supported by this program.

**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.*

In Massachusetts, the PEG model is being looked to as an example of how support for high quality prekindergarten implementation can be built into an aligned public-private system of early education. In many ways, the first year of this federally-funded program has become a high profile testing ground for how universal prekindergarten might be implemented - when ambitiously designed, carefully supported, more fully funded and collaboratively implemented at the local, state and federal levels.

The manner in which EEC, LEAs and ELP agencies both monitor and support high quality program implementation and the successes and challenges experienced in this program are informing discussions about EEC's broader efforts to build a strong professional workforce and to support quality across the early education system. In the context of PEG, supporting, monitoring and enhancing quality is integrated throughout structural partnerships, both between EEC and LEAs, and the collaboration of LEAs and ELPs at the local level.

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

#### Structures for Collaboration and Coordination

The PEG design and coordination of funding and oversight includes an emphasis on direct service, joint decision making, and overall concentration of efforts. It requires that funding and program design decisions be made collaboratively by the local LEA and ELP partners. As we approach the second half of year three, communities will begin to plan for year four with the support of state PEG staff.

EEC has maintained the staff dedicated to the PEG grant, although specific roles of staff have changed. EEC hired the individuals charged with implementation of the PEG program carefully:

- Anita Moeller serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Program Administration. She has nearly 30 years' experience in early education. She spent 15 years as the founding executive director of the Acre Family Child Care System and as served the Commonwealth since 2001 in several roles including Head Start State Collaboration Director, EEC Regional Director, EEC Director of Interagency Partnerships, and most recently as the Director of the Preschool Expansion Grant. Anita holds a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
- Jocelyn Bowne now serves at the Director of Research and Preschool Expansion Grant

Administration. Jocelyn came to EEC from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child. Not only does she hold an Ed.D. from Harvard's Graduate School of Education with a focus on early childhood research but she has prior personal experience as a preschool teacher in New York City.

- Sarah Volkenant is the Workforce Development and Preschool Expansion Grant Specialist for the PEG program. Sarah has worked directly with preschool teachers as a coach, has directly supervised coaches and has managed a coaching program in Arizona that was closely tied with supporting programs' advancement through their QRIS. Sarah holds a Master's degree in Educational Psychology. She also has experience as a preschool teacher.

As in the first two years of PEG, an Interagency Service Agreement with ESE allows for the time of their Early Childhood Team Lead, Donna Traynham. Donna brings years of experience and tremendous expertise in early education policy - her close partnership in the PEG program exemplifies the collaboration expected at all levels of program implementation. Donna serves as a consultant to the PEG team, especially related to alignment of priorities and policies of ESE and EEC, including the initiative to support inclusion, an ongoing statewide effort. She participates in team meetings, advises on policy decisions, reviews documents and attends meetings with grantees as needed.

EEC uses the balance of PEG dollars to support the longitudinal study, joint professional development, and is planning the development of information technology infrastructure that will support PEG and enhance the system overall.

#### Workforce and Quality Supports

As EEC considers an enhanced technical assistance and coaching model, the integrated delivery of professional development opportunities more broadly, and the workforce related components of the QRIS system that is under revision, we will look to PEG to inform its design.

As communities have developed their models of professional supports, essential characteristics of professional development have been identified by programs. Implementation of effective professional learning requires intensive planning and collaboration across LEAs and ELPs, and must include leadership from all partners including program directors, coaches and administrators. A clear, and well integrated focus for professional supports is necessary and all supports, including coaching and training should be aligned around this focus. In most PEG communities, formal classroom observation tools and a shared curriculum provide a unified focus across the system, establishing the content focus that is integrated across supports. The engagement of the program leadership to drive this cohesive structure is critical, and defining clear roles in supporting educators is key. Important features of professional learning include training, coaching and collaboration among teachers, and should focus on the entire teaching team. In a program that is open for at least eight hours and runs for the full year, staffing classrooms with three teachers has proven essential to allow the flexibility needed to implement the job embedded professional learning opportunities and to support the integration of high quality practices in the classroom.

Programs have also highlighted the essential role that the commensurate salaries play in allowing them to expect greater investment of teachers in their professional learning and expect higher levels of teacher retention.

#### Inclusion

As described earlier in this report, EEC is looking to PEG for innovative collaborations between LEA and ELP partners that better meet the needs of child with disabilities. Whether this results in fewer transitions for children, new ways of funding services collaboratively, joint professional development for teachers, or interventions that ultimately reduce the referrals to special education, EEC looks forward to innovations to follow. Inclusion of children with special needs has required extensive coordination with LEA staff to organize service provision and ensuring that educators are supported in implementing accommodations. Tremendous progress has been made as PEG grantee communities are

engaged in a statewide initiative that was described extensively in previous sections.

### Tracking of Data

SASIDs continue to be assigned and EEC has developed methods for gathering data from each grantee, including TS GOLD data that is entered on each child. As the program develops, EEC will consider ways to tie elements such as these into developing systems such as the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system and the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) database.

### Grant Monitoring

The process for monitoring via a simultaneous fiscal and program approach, the use of Regional Monitoring Teams, and the monitoring of ELPS by LEAs are all new methods of monitoring for EEC. Standard procedures for monitoring remain consistent, and inform thinking around how EEC might replicate these procedures with other programs and grants.

### Research

With the longitudinal study, EEC continues to garner tremendous lessons from the PEG experience and also determine other research resources to support EECs work more broadly. Evaluation results have been made available to programs in an on-going manner and have been useful to PEG programs in determining mid-course corrections. Results have also received the attention of the EEC Board and EEC staff developing the agency's workforce agenda. EEC continues to build its collaborations with ESE and with the Regional Education Lab and consider opportunities to learn more about the long term success of children in the PEG program, while also looking for opportunities to inform the broader workforce efforts.

### Roll-out of New Standards

While EEC has strong licensing requirements and has had Early Childhood Program Standards since 2003, new standards have been developed including; WIDA's Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELD), Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Approaches to Play and Learning (APL). PEG communities have trained trainers in the SEL/APL Standards and trainings have been offered to the community. ESE is also developing a Guide to Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Environments that integrates standards across systems and ages. The guide is designed to support educators in understanding the continuum of skill development expected across prekindergarten and kindergarten in each standard and to provide examples of learning experiences that can be used to support the standard.

### Alignment of EEC-funded Supports

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

### Funding

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

as a whole.

With its eyes on the PEG program, the MA legislature included \$500K in EEC's fiscal year 2016 and \$200,000 in the fiscal year 2017 budget for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership grant. This funding supported the development of local strategic plans, based on the PEG model, for increased high quality preschool programming in high-need communities. The resulting local strategic plans have informed EEC on the ability of the 13 communities in FY16 and three communities in FY17 selected for the grant to serve children in high quality preschool programs, much like the current PEG model. In reviewing the strategic plans, it is clear that expansion of high quality preschool is a need across the Commonwealth. The plans confirmed that the PEG model is one that could be expanded in other communities if funds were to become available, noting in many places that up to 50% of children are entering kindergarten with no prior preschool experience.

## 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.

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

Five high-need communities in Massachusetts -- Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield -- are being funded to implement full-day, full-year preschool for four-year-olds through public-private partnerships between the local public school district (the LEA) and two or three local licensed early learning providers (the ELPs). The LEAs have been granted the funds and are subcontracting with the ELPs for the direct services they provide to eligible children and families in the community. While the ELPs provide direct services to the four-year-old children, the LEAs have worked with the ELPs to create and sustain implementation plans that include all structural elements that are included in the definition of HQPP. Minor adjustments in community plans for implementation have occurred across the state, including the addition of coaching for year two and targeted, coordinated comprehensive services.

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

EEC requires that all PEG-funded LEA and ELP partners in each community complete a Direct Service Summary (DSS) to outline an implementation plan for HQPPs for eligible children. All quality criteria are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services that will support four year-old children in developing critical development and learning competencies needed for successful learning. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's QRIS and through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation. The DSS tool was revised slightly to include more detailed information about direct services funded through the PEG grant, and the addition of a professional development plan was included in required documents for year two planning. **Proposed quality enhancement activities outlined in the plan are included in the narrative sections below.**

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

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through regular EEC staff attendance at local grantee meetings and through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that occurs on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by mid-February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the

PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to analyze documented activities and observations of the LEAs and their oversight of the ELPs to ensure that federal awards are used for the authorized purpose in compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and the provisions of contracts or grant agreements and associated performance goals are achieved. This review serves as a precursor to a formal audit that took place during the summer months of 2016, modeling the monitoring that is expected at the local level. The formal audit provided the LEAs with a clear understanding of the expectations of the grant requirements that was monitored in their formal audits of their ELPs in the winter months of 2016-2017. The formal audit provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing support if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. The review afforded EEC the opportunity to highlight sound and innovative administration and management practices that may already be in place.

To date, the first round of LEA audits of ELPs have been completed, and the second round is underway. An additional round of ELP audits occurred in the summer months of 2017, in advance of the formal audits of LEAs by EEC that were conducted in for July 2017.

### **High Staff Qualifications**

Consistent with year one, all PEG-funded classrooms continue to be staffed by at least one highly qualified educator. ELPs report that all lead educators have at least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood or closely related field and 23 percent have Masters degrees. All classroom instructional staff meet the appropriate credentialing requirements as outlined in the licensing regulations and policies established by EEC. In order to monitor this quality component, EEC requires that all LEAs submit all PEG classroom staff information so the level of education and certification can be verified by internal EEC teacher qualification systems. To date, there has been consistent compliance of this requirement, although grantees still report the challenge of identifying and hiring highly qualified staff, especially at the assistant teacher level.

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

#### EEC-funded Professional Development Supports

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

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

All PEG-funded programs have access to professional development through these existing structures offered regionally by EEC funded EPS grantees, are participating in the QRIS system and will attend high quality trainings as required by existing QRIS standards over the course of the grant period. The QRIS standards include requirements for professional development aligned with core competencies as outlined by EEC and cover content related to curriculum, screening tools, assessment, supporting positive relationships, the MA Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers and/or Preschool Learning Standards, observation and documentation, working with children from diverse cultures, second language acquisition, and improving the quality of health and safety practice: managing early education and care settings that include children with allergies, special diets, and specialized feeding issues.

To further build capacity at the local level, EEC is offering professional learning opportunities to PEG educational and family support staff to drive continued quality improvement and build a network of

support among grantees across the state.

EEC has contracted with Anne Douglass from the University of Massachusetts Boston Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation to offer a two-part leadership series to PEG instructional leaders as well as family support administrators. Using a research-based framework that draws on the Learn Lead Excel model from the Ounce of Prevention, the goal of the series is to enhance individual, organizational and community capacity to drive improvement in instructional practice and family engagement efforts to ultimately improve children's learning and developmental outcomes.

#### Local Plans for Professional Development

Local teams of LEA and ELP educational leadership continue to plan for intentional, integrated professional development of PEG teachers, including training, coaching, and professional learning communities.

PEG programs and classrooms are allowed five program closure days for professional development, three additional closure days outside what is typically approved by EEC for programs receiving childcare subsidies. Additionally, PEG programs in four communities were allowed up to five additional closure days in between year one and year two, after submitting a proposal that was reviewed and approved by EEC Senior Leadership. During this time, educators received additional professional development, conducted home visits, and prepared classrooms for a new cohort of students.

In many communities, QRIS required professional development content serves as a foundation to community-driven and developed content that is specific to the needs of the at the local level. With the support of an EEC Workforce Specialist, EEC encourages that PEG programs to offer joint professional development for all PEG programs in a community, with a focus on content that builds the capacity of educators around best-practices in early childhood classrooms. Some report that it is challenging to plan community-wide professional development with competing priorities and requirements of existing systems, but we continue to address this need for support and content development through facilitation of local meetings. In year three, communities are considering how they might offer professional development opportunities that build on foundational knowledge and extend educators' capacity to bring theory to practice. Each year, programs submit a professional development plan to outline planned training and content to be covered, and often incorporate opportunities for ELPs to participate in joint professional development. The professional development plans also include the approach to integrated workforce supports, including the role of coaching, strategies to coordinate various technical assistance and consultants, the role of classroom quality data, and plans for professional learning communities. The design of these plans varies greatly and is intentionally created to meet the needs of the grantee community, although similar content related to the QRIS professional development requirements is included. As noted previously, one priority of joint professional development in year two and three is supporting inclusive practices.

As the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool becomes more broadly used in PEG programs, various professional learning opportunities in PEG programs are leveraging the classroom observation tool as a common language to discuss classroom practice across PEG, and in some cases, public school prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Through this focus, educational leaders and coaches at the local level are integrating the content of the tool in their plans to support teaching teams. Central to this approach is the local use of the PEG evaluation data of classroom quality, which serves as a benchmark of understanding where the PEG classrooms are situated in the quality continuum. An emerging theme within this work includes how coaching can support the improvement of instructional practice in the context of curricula. EEC continues to work closely with the communities to plan for how to approach this integration.

PEG communities continue to report that the PEG model has allowed for more individualized, high quality professional development than is typical for their other programs. Some partners attribute this

success to PEG, as it is an opportunity for partners to establish a community-wide vision for professional development, by leveraging the expertise, strengths and resources of all early learning partners. For example, in three PEG communities, Boston, Lowell, and Springfield, where the PEG classroom curriculum aligns with the curriculum of the public schools, the LEA offers professional learning opportunities through training and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on a regular basis for public school prekindergarten and PEG educators on curriculum modules, with a focus on effective instructional practices. Professional development opportunities leveraged by PEG have promoted public-private partnerships across the Commonwealth. Professional learning around curriculum as noted above is an example of cross-sector coordination that is occurring throughout the state.

In addition, grantee communities are building on system improvements at the community level for professional development of PEG and non-PEG educators. Lawrence offered a professional development opportunity for prekindergarten educators in PEG, prekindergarten educators at the public school, as well as public school leadership, with a focus on the support of dual language learners. Coordination and alignment between public and private sectors has also leveraged more informal professional learning opportunities. Lowell convenes a professional learning community (PLC) for PEG prekindergarten and public school prekindergarten educators to support implementation of curriculum modules that are being piloted, while the adoption of these modules in year three of PEG more broadly is continuing this collaboration. Springfield PEG coaches are facilitating a PLC of PEG and non-PEG educators, including both community based and public school prekindergarten educators, who are all implementing the same curriculum. Holyoke is convening building-level leadership teams, including PEG educators, the prekindergarten and kindergarten coach, kindergarten teachers and school principals to discuss the alignment of practice in the prekindergarten and early elementary years.

#### Coaching and Educational Leadership

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

PEG coaches are also engaged in professional development and networking opportunities in year two of PEG. In some communities, they participate and support the work of the *Building Inclusive Communities* work at the local level. They also participate in a training and technical assistance series with other EEC funded coaches across the state to build capacity around effective coaching practices. As mentioned previously, EEC awarded a contract to the University of Massachusetts Boston to offer PEG instructional leaders, including PEG coaches and program directors, a professional learning opportunity to build their capacity to determine how curriculum is selected, and how leadership can support teachers in using the curriculum, with particular attention to integrating curriculum implementation with quality child-teacher interactions and differentiation of instruction. This series of seminars/panels and specific PLC strands for directors/coaches and other administration should began.

in May 2016 and continued throughout the remainder of year two. A continuation of this series is being offered through year three. Additionally, the majority of PEG coaches attended a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) certified observer training offered by a Teachstone certified trainer in early winter 2016. By participating in this training, coaches have a framework and a common language by which they can help support effective classroom practices with educators. The approach and stage of implementation related to this is in early development. A follow-up meeting after the CLASS training occurred in February 2016 and the continuation of support for coaches with using the CLASS tool, with a specific focus on the instructional support domain, are underway.

As a result of coaching and additional staffing, structures have been put in place for PEG classrooms to offer more non-instructional time for educators, allowing for additional time to meet with coaches to discuss ongoing progress in goals, joint lesson planning with other educators, and professional learning communities for lead educators and classroom teaching teams.

Additionally, all PEG-funded classrooms have an opportunity to participate in the longitudinal study of the PEG model that will provide communities with access to classroom quality and child-level data at least once per year. PEG communities have received community and program level data and have thought carefully about how this information should inform professional development planning for their communities. Common trends were identified and integrated into local professional development planning meetings.

#### Statewide PEG Grantee Meetings

The PEG EEC staff continue to facilitate statewide grantee meetings to promote cross-community learning, respond to emerging challenges related to implementation, and build local leadership capacity. For example in the first year of PEG, in response to challenge of fully implementing comprehensive services, EEC invited panelists from the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, a part of the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services, to offer resources around supporting children and families behavioral and mental health both statewide and regionally. After the panel, grantees participated in facilitated, cross-community discussions and planning for comprehensive services in year two. In November 2016, EEC facilitated another statewide grantee meeting to review the year one PEG evaluation data from a statewide level and brainstorm implications for implementation. Additionally, reflections and planning for summer programming in PEG were also discussed. As a result, grantee communities were connected to additional resources, a platform for ongoing planning and implementation, and learned successful practices from other communities across the state.

EEC continues to take a multi-pronged approach to engage grantees on various aspects of the grant. Statewide grantee meetings are conducted to discuss trends in specific statewide progress in the high quality preschool components as outlined in PEG and to provide an opportunity to reflect and plan for implementation adjustments for next program year. Topics include planning for inclusion, summer programming, and transition to kindergarten activities. Additionally, PEG grantees were convened in the spring of 2017 to discuss planning for sustainability, as mentioned in previous sections of this report. This topic will be maintained through another statewide sustainability planning meeting in the spring of 2018, and is in the early stages of development.

As mentioned in previous sections, EEC continues to offer professional learning opportunities to instructional leadership, including program administrators, directors and coaches in PEG programs, offering a platform for collaboration and discussion around effective quality improvement in classrooms. A parallel strand of professional learning is also being offered to PEG staff who are involved in family engagement activities to strengthen the professional collaborations focused on improving family engagement activities in PEG programs. Participants will identify key issues and set concrete goals for desired changes, while sharing successes, challenges and solutions across



communities. The first day of the two-day family engagement leadership series is being offered in March 2018.

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

Year two PEG classrooms were open by September 2016. From the beginning of implementation, all PEG classrooms have maintained at least a child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1, consistent with the expectations outlined in the EEC licensing regulations. ELPs have budgeted for additional teaching staff or substitute teaching staff to be scheduled during PEG program hours to cover classrooms, allowing for more non-instructional time for teaching staff. The protected time outside of classrooms has provided lead teaching staff more curriculum planning time within classrooms and across classrooms. Non-instructional time has also allowed for time for lead instructional staff to meet with coaches to reflect on progress of established classroom goals. A three teacher per classroom model is implemented in some PEG classrooms as a strategy to maintain appropriate ratios in consideration for break times and staffing schedules for a full-day program. In some classrooms, the third teacher is present for most of the day to support the classroom lowering ratios below the required 10:1, while in other classrooms the third teacher is scheduled at specific times in order to alleviate other staff for breaks and planning time. The enhanced staffing model continues to provide programs with flexibility to engage in job-embedded professional development and ongoing planning and communication with families, as well as lower child-teacher ratios for much of the day.

The classroom quality results reflect the early return on these investments.

- In Year 1 (2015-2016) and Year 2 (2016-2017), PEG classrooms demonstrated strong levels of quality on two standardized observational measures, comparable to or better than other large scale early education programs.
- More significantly, these classrooms demonstrated growth in quality between Year 1 and 2 on two important dimensions of quality, classroom organization and emotional support. Measures of instructional quality showed early signs of growth as well, but these were not consistent across communities.

Although a more expensive model than the traditional two teachers per classroom, it has proven essential to develop consistency in professional learning opportunities for teachers. Programs have been able to more easily maintain required teacher-child ratios when teachers left for training, curriculum planning time or coaching, facilitating the consistent provision of professional growth opportunities. Programs also report that the low child-teacher ratios that result support increased opportunities for small group and one on one engagement between children and teachers.

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

PEG classrooms across the Commonwealth have all been designed and staffed to maintain a class size of no more than 20, with at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications since the beginning of the program year. In Lawrence, there are classrooms with smaller group sizes (of no more than 10 children) due to limitations in physical space and the need to maintain EEC licensing requirements. Additionally, a number of PEG-funded lead educators have a Master's degree in early childhood or a related field, and some programs report that some classrooms are staffed with more than one teacher with a Bachelor's degree. EEC has also required that lead educators be EEC teacher certified in PEG-funded classrooms. Through the monitoring process, EEC continues to support the LEA in verifying the staff qualifications in PEG-funded classrooms. In the formal audit visits to each PEG community, EEC encouraged LEA's to conduct onsite monitoring visits to PEG-funded programs and classrooms to ensure appropriate class sizes and staff qualifications. Increased compensation and, in most communities, a stable three teacher per classroom model contribute to the retention of PEG educators and increased opportunities to improve classroom quality over time through cohesive, job embedded +

professional supports.

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

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

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

As mentioned in previous narrative sections, there are some PEG children who attend a public inclusion classroom in the morning and a PEG classroom in the afternoon to provide access to a full-day program. In all situations, the best interest of the child and family must be considered. Preschool services can be offered during non-traditional hours if deemed needed by the grantee community. This wrap-around model has been particularly successful in Springfield and Lowell. The Springfield PEG classrooms are co-located with public school inclusion classrooms, so the transition to a PEG classroom in the afternoon is as simple as walking the child down the hall. Lowell Public Schools and Lawrence Public Schools have worked closely with the PEG ELPs to provide transportation for children with IEPs that attend PEG classrooms in the afternoon.

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

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

Historically, while many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority of children receive their special education services in public school settings. As a result, the infrastructure didn't always exist to serve children in community-based settings. However, as the PEG sites remain in a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings, although this remains a challenge. Many communities continue to build collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff work side by side to support all children, including eligible children with disabilities. The communities also continue to streamline the process for referring children for whom there may be concerns about development. These conversations also provide opportunities for LEAs and ELPs to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, with or without an IEP, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, should the child be identified as eligible.

At each subgrantee, the expectation is that 6.9 percent of children served will be children with disabilities (this target is derived from the statewide percentage of children with disabilities, as this is larger than the federal percentage). There are two primary challenges that Massachusetts has faced in serving children with disabilities in PEG classrooms. These challenges, and EEC's response to these challenges, is described in great detail in previous narrative sections. To summarize, the majority of children with disabilities in Massachusetts receive their IEP services from the public schools in public school settings. As can be gleaned from Indicator 6 data, while over 70 percent of children with disabilities receive their IEP services in partial or full inclusion settings, the majority of those services

are delivered in inclusive public school settings. As a result, we expect that a large percentage of children with IEPs in these communities are already enrolled in public school inclusion classrooms. We also recognize that children are enrolled in multiple settings and, as such, EEC and PEG grantee communities continue to plan for how they might implement IEP services in PEG classrooms when appropriate. Also, because Massachusetts prioritized children who are not currently enrolled in any formal early childhood classroom, children already enrolled in public school settings, including children with disabilities, were not eligible. In response to this challenge, children with IEPs who have previous or current formal education experience are eligible for PEG in year two.

Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of comprehensive services will support the children to make progress and ultimately, result in *fewer* referrals to special education. Due to these factors, we expect that the 6.9 percent threshold is more likely to be met toward the end of the program year (August 2017). In May 2017, 5.5% of children enrolled were reported with an IEP, suggesting the local and state efforts are making a positive impact on progress related to this goal.

As PEG programs are being considered when decisions are made about the least restrictive environment, EEC and ESE are also working to ensure that educators in PEG classrooms have the appropriate training and supports to serve children with disabilities. EEC, in collaboration with ESE and the Head Start Collaboration Office, is offering a professional development series on inclusion. At the local level, communities like Holyoke, Lowell and Springfield have offered, or plan to offer joint professional development opportunities to educators around the referral and IEP process and how to adjust instructional practices to meet accommodations outlined in the IEP. Two communities are considering how they might leverage the expertise of the public school staff to support inclusive practices in community based settings through targeted classroom support such as coaching. Challenges in hiring for additional positions have arisen in the communities, largely related to finding qualified candidates, and efforts to recruit continue.

**Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry**

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

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

In response to this requirement, two PEG communities have adopted curriculum for PEG classrooms that aligns with the public school early childhood programs (prekindergarten and kindergarten) and one continues to pilot aligned modules. Springfield and Boston implement curriculum in the PEG classrooms that is also being utilized by public prekindergarten classrooms. These communities offered professional development to all educators and continue to support curriculum implementation through onsite coaching provided by the LEA.

In year two, Lowell piloted curriculum modules that are being implemented in the public school classrooms. Feedback from directors, coaches and teachers was solicited and the advantages and disadvantages of the curriculum in comparison to the Creative Curriculum (in use prior to the pilot) were discussed. The decision was made to continue to use the public school curriculum in year three while also piloting Building Blocks, but to create an implementation calendar that also allowed additional time for exploration of children's interests. In year two, Lawrence ELPs adopted the same curriculum and put in place onsite coaching supports to ensure effective implementation. In year three, one of the

programs has decided to pilot a curriculum that is in line with Lawrence Public School's growing focus on rich content-based curriculum, and the experience will provide a guide for future decisions. Holyoke has elected to allow programs to continue to use curricula already being used by their non-PEG funded classrooms, but have focused coaching on the CLASS domains to build alignment across programs and with kindergarten classrooms (receiving similar coaching). Regardless of the curriculum selected, it is a statewide requirement that all curriculum are aligned with State Early Learning and Development Standards and Curriculum frameworks as set out by EEC and ESE.

Throughout the grant period, all PEG programs continue to meet all EEC licensing requirements for health and safety standards. Additionally, each PEG partner will seek and maintain NAEYC accreditation and QRIS level 3 or seek and maintain QRIS level 4 by the end of the grant period. QRIS program participation provides a structure to monitor and support appropriate learning environments and quality improvement efforts as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), and either the CLASS or the Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale. The nature, context and content of interactions between the educators and children will be measured in the evaluation/longitudinal study and participation in the QRIS by tools such as the CLASS and ECERS. To date, the majority of PEG programs are making steady progress in NAEYC accreditation and/or the QRIS system and are on target to meet the requirements no later than the end of the grant period. Preliminary data suggests that 37 percent of programs advanced at least one level in the QRIS in 2017. EEC also plans to work with individual communities to ensure the classroom quality data being collected as part of the evaluation is being used to support classrooms and programs in continuous quality improvement and to inform program implementation as it relates to curriculum and classroom learning environments. As mentioned in previous sections, EEC plans to continue to facilitate program level meetings with leadership staff to discuss and reflect on child level and classroom level data to support PEG planning moving forward.

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

As part of a cross-agency collaboration, Massachusetts adopted the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid model, providing a policy-level structure to support all programs in the mixed-delivery system an opportunity to understand and implement practices that support the individual needs of children, specifically around social and emotional development. Intensive professional development around the CSEFEL model continues to be offered to the mixed-delivery system, and is accessible to members of the PEG programs. As a result, many PEG programs across the state consider the practices as outlined in the model as a guide and integrate components in professional development opportunities for educators, family engagement staff and comprehensive service providers. To date, Boston, Lowell and Springfield are engaged in Pyramid model work through a joint initiative with EEC and ESE. Through this model, public school programs are receiving coaching and leadership from the communities are considering how they might continue to integrate features of this model into PEG classrooms.

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

As part of a comprehensive assessment system, PEG communities use a developmental screening tool to determine individual needs and developmental milestones of children and use this data to inform instruction and refer children to additional screening if needed. EEC has allowed flexibility at the local level to determine the most appropriate tool. Most PEG programs are using the Ages and Stages

Questionnaire, a tool that encourages the engagement of parents in the screening process. Some communities are also in the process of identifying and implementing a home language screening tool for children.

TS GOLD is the required formative assessment tool statewide for PEG. Communities are working toward using the data collected to inform instruction and professional development for PEG educators at a local level, taking into account the needs of diverse learners, and this process is supporting identification of professional development topics related to assessment at a statewide level. PEG communities continue to discuss strategies to share data with kindergarten teachers or other elementary school administrators at the community level, in preparation for a child entering kindergarten. Lowell and Lawrence have developed a process to transfer student files, with formative assessment data to kindergarten teachers. Holyoke has leveraged the location of PEG classrooms in elementary schools to facilitate teacher-teacher conversations about expectations and, in some cases, individual children. Boston and Lawrence are piloting systems to partner PEG programs with particular elementary schools to explore ways to build communication, collaboration and streamline enrollment processes. Collaboration with local kindergarten readiness efforts, like Boston's Countdown to Kindergarten and Lawrence's Lawrence Learns have been built, as have efforts to support parents' early enrollment in kindergarten.

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

All PEG funded lead educator salaries are commensurate to the public school prekindergarten educators. In most cases, this is a significant increase in salary, with the exception of some full-day Head Start programs where the salary increase is only slightly higher in PEG. ELPs in PEG communities report that identifying and hiring highly-qualified staff for PEG classrooms proved to be a challenge, as there is a shortage of highly qualified staff available in the general early childhood community in Massachusetts. Partners report that in their non-PEG funded programs, they encounter similar staffing challenges. We believe that by providing PEG educators a salary commensurate with the public school, we can anticipate increased staff retention in PEG-funded classrooms, allowing consistency and increased continuity of care for eligible children, a structure to implement a process of continuous quality improvement in PEG classrooms, and additional opportunities to build competency and overall capacity of classroom educators through ongoing professional development.

Although the base salary of PEG educators is comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff, the actual relative compensation of the full-time, full-year PEG educators is less than the public school staff when broken down to an hourly rate. Local K-12 instructional staff work fewer hours per day and only nine months per year, compared to the PEG educators who work longer hours per day for the entire calendar year. It is difficult to ascertain how many PEG educators have left PEG programs for a public school position, as ELPs do not have information from all staff that may have been collected during an exit interview. In year two of PEG, grantees have not reported this as a consistent challenge, although the question of how they might retain and compensate staff after the grant funding is gone is beginning to surface in conversations around sustainability.

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

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

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

evaluation.

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

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

The implementation and outcomes evaluation of Year 2 has identified the ways in which PEG programs continue to improve and show success in achieving the goals of the program.

### **Findings on Year 2 Educator Supports**

In the second year of PEG implementation, programs continued to maintain highly-educated teaching staff. PEG programs retained most of their teachers from Year 1 to Year 2; 77 percent of lead teachers and 70 percent of non-lead teachers continued teaching in the second year of the program.

Programs continued to provide professional development opportunities to educators through training, coaching by local school district staff, and formal release time for teacher planning. In Year 1, only four of five communities provided PEG coaching.

- **Training.** Compared to Year 1, in Year 2, PEG lead and non-lead teachers received, on average, more training. Also, the differential in the amount of training between lead and non-lead teachers that was identified in Year 1 narrowed in Year 2.
- **Coaching.** Nearly all lead and non-lead teachers reported receiving coaching in Year 2, and the proportion of teachers that received coaching was higher in Year 2 than in Year 1. In both years, most coaching was provided by PEG coaches employed by the local school district.
- **Release time for planning.** In Year 2, more lead teachers reported having formal release time for instructional planning, although the majority still reported that the amount of release time was not sufficient to complete their job responsibilities.

In Year 2, PEG programs responded to implementation challenges identified in Year 1, and most notably expanded and improved some of the professional development opportunities to educators. In particular:

- PEG communities and programs intentionally increased the alignment across the different forms of professional learning (i.e., training and coaching) and the coherence of the professional learning, classroom curriculum, and assessments.
- PEG districts and programs expanded the professional learning opportunities for non-lead teachers.
- PEG programs focused more on establishing a professional learning community for teachers, which represents a potentially powerful avenue for sustaining improvements in programming and instruction.
- Teacher assessment of the usefulness of the training and coaching remained decidedly mixed. PEG districts and programs may want to explore further which professional opportunities would

be more meaningful for improving their practice.

### **Findings on Year 2 Classroom Quality**

Observations of the 48 PEG classrooms in Year 2 using the CLASS, a standardized measure of overall instructional quality with a focus on interactions among teachers and children in the classroom, showed overall improvements compared to Year 1.

- For the Classroom Organization domain, the average CLASS score across all PEG classrooms rose from 5.2 to 5.7, which represents a significant increase. Substantially more classrooms were rated as high quality on this domain in Year 2 (75 percent) than in Year 1 (40 percent).
- For the Emotional Support domain, the Year 2 score (5.9) was more similar to the Year 1 score (5.7), and represents a significant increase. The proportion of classrooms rated as high quality increased from 60 percent to 80 percent.
- For the Instructional Support domain, although the proportion of classes rated as moderate quality increased slightly from 75 percent to 79 percent, the average score remained relatively unchanged from Year 1 (3.2) to Year 2 (3.1).

Improved scores from Year 1 to Year 2 at least in part reflected development over time in teachers who were there for both years. The majority of lead teachers were retained in PEG classrooms from Year 1 to Year 2. Excluding new teachers from the analysis, the average scores improved on all three domains (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Percentage of PEG Classrooms in Different Quality Categories by CLASS Domain, Winter 2017 and Winter 2016, Classrooms with Same Teacher in 2016 and 2017 (n = 36 classrooms<sup>a</sup>)**

<sup>a</sup> Boston=9, Holyoke=4, Lawrence=8, Lowell=6, Springfield=9

The findings on classroom quality suggest that there is still some work to do to identify which professional learning opportunities will significantly strengthen instructional quality (e.g., support for teachers to provide more individualized instruction). This challenge is not unique to PEG, as the instructional support domain tends to be lower and the hardest to improve in the broader early childhood literature.

### **Findings on Year 2 Family Supports and Comprehensive Services**

Community and program leadership made efforts in Year 2 to increase the level of supports for families and to introduce more intentionality in the focus of the supports. Overall, family engagement was perceived as an area of improvement by a majority (65 percent) of program directors in Year 2.

PEG programs reported focusing less on individual parent social activities and events and focusing more on an approach to building parent capacities in Year 2, not only to increase home support for child learning and development, but also to enhance parent mental health as well as parenting and broader skills for the current job market. A high proportion of teachers (74 percent) reported participation in home visits, which raises the potential that deeper connections are being made between the classroom and the home.

The parent-program connection is an area that merits additional exploration for the PEG program. Although challenges remain with engaging and serving all families, given the other demands that many PEG parents have, universal participation may be unrealistic, yet programs should continue to be creative about ways to deliver programs and supports to parents that are flexible and responsive to different parent schedules.



## Conclusions

A continuing theme of PEG implementation is the notable variation both across and within communities in the reach and intensity of supports for educators and for families. More needs to be learned about the extent to which variation in supports and services is based on (a) differences across programs in the intentional emphasis on different parts of the PEG model; (b) differences within programs in the level of need of individual educators and parents that may arise because of scheduling challenges, educator or parent motivation, or the like; and/or (c) structural and capacity challenges in fully implementing some or all of the PEG supports.

Overall, it appears that the key quality components of the PEG model are being implemented with increasing intensity. Whether or not the PEG model impacts child outcomes will be better understood in spring 2018, when impact study findings from the PEG evaluation will be available.

### **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**

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

All PEG communities include a Head Start partner and many communities have adopted components of family engagement and comprehensive service strategies based on the Head Start model. Additionally, as part of the QRIS, programs are required to be trained in and adopt the Strengthening Families framework. In most non-Head Start community based organizations, offering a menu of comprehensive services at this level is a new practice, but has been refined in year two based on challenges and lessons learned from year one of implementation.

There remains a significant amount of variation in community level plans to offer comprehensive services, as some services are being offered directly by the LEA partner, some via PEG funds, some accessed via other EEC-grant funded initiatives and others are contracting services to existing community vendors. Grantees continue to report that these additional services allow for greater access to specialized support staff, including but not limited to literacy specialists, mental health consultants, nurses, occupational therapists, vision and screening services, and speech therapists.

In Year 1, all communities discussed the ongoing challenges in providing these services to children, highlighting the challenge of creating a streamlined process for creating access to services for children who are in various ELPs in one grantee community. In places where the provision of services varies across all ELPs, LEAs report the challenge of monitoring the provision of these services, and in response, have put clear expectations in place around what documentation will be collected during the audits to verify implementation of comprehensive services paid for by the grant. EEC staff continue to support communities through ongoing technical assistance and attendance at monthly grantee meetings to ensure comprehensive services are being adequately funded and accessible moving forward.

In response to the lessons learned in the first two years of PEG, grantee communities have made progress in the effective implementation of these services. Overall, grantees have refined the approach to comprehensive services, and, in most cases, have a more targeted approach to what services they provide and at an increased intensity. Furthermore, grantees across the state have highlighted the need to increase and streamline access to mental and behavioral health services for children in PEG.

- In year two, Boston ELPs all contracted with a community organization that provides mental and behavioral health consultation for children, onsite technical assistance for educators, and

training.

- In Lowell, a comprehensive service and family engagement coordinator was a newly funded position in PEG and provides oversight and coordination of all comprehensive services and general resource referrals for families.
- Lawrence also increased the intensity of mental and behavioral health supports for children in year two. One ELP in particular funded a new mental health consultant position that provides support to children and families.
- In planning for year two, Springfield LEAs and ELPs created a comprehensive service menu to provide programs guidance on what specific services would be available to all children, regardless of the program they are enrolled in.
- ELPs in Springfield and Holyoke included onsite mental health consultation in their plans for year two.

In Springfield, Lowell, and Lawrence, plans for year two comprehensive services also include onsite speech/language, occupational and physical therapy, in some cases contracted directly by the public school but also through contracts with local community organizations. Various technical assistance providers working with children and families in PEG programs has led to local level efforts to coordinate the team of technical assistance providers available to staff in the early care and education programs. The procedures and guidance for the coordination of services is in development across grantee communities.

Every PEG community continues to engage with local EEC-funded CFCE grantee coordinators and other community partners to conduct outreach and provide support to educators working with families enrolled in the community partner programs, with a particular focus on outreach strategies for hard-to-reach children and families, including those not currently served by early education and care programs.

Although programs varied in the ways they provided these services, most programs have employed staff whose primary focus is working with PEG families and have instituted home visiting, volunteer and learning opportunities for parents, and screening and referrals for children and families. In most communities, family engagement staff are bilingual and work collaboratively with educators and leadership of public schools and community based providers to define and implement a community-level strategy to integrate family engagement strategies throughout the preschool programs.

The majority of PEG programs (25 out of 28 centers - in Boston some smaller programs did not include this position) had a family support coordinator who organized group parent engagement activities and provided case management to PEG families. Programs continued to offer a robust set of opportunities for family engagement, including home visits. In Year 2, community and program leadership made efforts to increase the level of supports for families and to introduce more intentionality in the focus of the supports. Overall, family engagement was perceived as an area of improvement by a majority (65 percent) of program directors and PEG programs reported focusing on building parents' capacity to support their child's learning, development, and safety. A high proportion of teachers (74 percent) reported participation in home visits, which raises the potential that deeper connections are being made between the classroom and the home.

The following positive changes were reported for PEG family support efforts during Year 2:

- Increased number of programs with dedicated family support staff and enhanced coordination in family support services across programs;
- Increased consistency of individual contact with families through parent-teacher conferences with all families;
- New strategies to build connections among parents and engaging parents about their child's learning and development in the classroom;
- Parent education opportunities based on parent needs through enhanced partnerships with local

agencies

In Year 2, as in Year 1, PEG offered comprehensive services to families through a combination of program, district and referral-based staff. Family support specialists reported being more intentional and proactive in their planning for comprehensive services in Year 2 and noted that stronger relationships with the parents translated into better services for the families. It appeared that in Year 2, PEG programs more consistently linked parents and children to a range of health and social services and provided more services directly at the programs, especially mental health support services. PEG programs also increased their ability to link families to material supports, such as food and clothing and transportation.

In general, family support specialists identified a high need for services among PEG families, and most challenges for families were directly related to the families' lack of income. The reported challenges include:

- Unemployment, housing and transportation.
- In two communities, specialists reported that increased numbers of families were facing homelessness or having to double up with other family members.
- Many PEG families lived in neighborhoods with high levels of violence.
- Some PEG families struggled with mental health and physical health problems.
- In two of the communities, family support specialists described families as having increased fears about deportation, which negatively impacted the families' willingness to get involved with the program.

PEG programs invested a great deal of staff time and resources in support for families, including home visits, multiple family events, case management and targeted mental health and behavioral supports (both to children directly and to support teachers working with particular children and families).

In Year 2, PEG programs have demonstrated that collaborations between private early education programs and public school districts can effectively implement high quality early education programs and provide an effective entry point to the education system for families and children entering the system for the first time.

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

Quality program standards, including evidence-based health and safety standards, for all early care and education settings have been adopted by the Commonwealth. These include EEC licensing of preschool programs, the QRIS, Federal Head Start Performance Standards, and NAEYC accreditation standards. The EEC licensing regulations are recognized as some of the most ambitious in the country. Ensuring all programs are frequently monitored and well-supported is crucial to the health and safety of children, and to align the state's monitoring performance with its robust regulations, EEC continues to develop new differential monitoring processes that will maximize the utilization of agency staff, enable more frequent interaction between EEC staff and programs, and acquire additional licensing staff to improve caseload ratios.



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

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

All PEG-funded HQPP slots for eligible children reported here are considered new preschool slots, as Massachusetts focused on expanding access to preschool rather than improving quality in existing state-funded classrooms. None of the PEG-funded classrooms were supported by any of the grant

funding that EEC has considered its key support for state preschool. As of December 1, 2017, PEG programs were serving 25 percent of eligible children in the five PEG communities. Expenses that contribute to the cost per slot are based on the remaining amount total funds available for grantee communities to serve eligible children (\$14,250,000), after subtracting the LEA funding contribution to the PEG longitudinal evaluation (\$648,617.00). The remaining sum after this calculation (\$13,601,383), divided by the number of new preschool slots (800), results in the cost per slot of \$17,001.73.

### **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.

EEC has developed a multi-pronged strategy to ensure that each subgrantee is effectively implementing HQPP that includes strong partnerships between EEC and subgrantee communities, as well as collaboration among partners within and across communities. These collaborative structures allow for careful monitoring and evaluation of program implementation, continuous program improvement, and program quality results.

#### Attendance at Local Grantee Meetings

Since the earliest stages of implementation, EEC's staff have supported subgrantees in the development of their local PEG programs. EEC staff have at times served in the role of a mediator and at other times have delivered answers to policy questions generated as programs looked for guidance on allowable implementation practice. In addition to this local-level support, EEC successfully completed a PEG Implementation Guide that provides general policy guidelines to answer questions that have surfaced over the course of the first year of PEG.

#### Monthly LEA Calls

EEC has begun to conduct monthly calls with LEAs from each community to discuss programmatic and fiscal updates. The calls also serve as a platform for grantees to discuss successes and challenges, creating a network of support among them. When topics are relevant to ELPs, representation from the community-based programs join as well. EEC is also offering a monthly check in with each LEA to provide TA and discuss challenges as they arise.

#### Statewide Grantee Meetings

EEC facilitates statewide grantee meetings at least twice per year to discuss general program updates and provide opportunities to discuss successes and challenges in implementation. Meetings have featured panels, presentations of evaluation data, across-community discussions around specific quality components, and time for community level planning. The network of learning has elicited positive responses from grantees, and contributes to the overall effort to ensure program quality.

#### Longitudinal Evaluation

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

The implementation findings of the first year evaluation were shared with communities individually and on a statewide level at two statewide meetings. Individual meetings with programs to review year one and two implementation and outcome findings are also planned, and have been completed in Boston. Programs are paying close attention to these results and have adjusted their approaches to educator supports and supports for families in response.

#### Fiscal and Program Audits

EEC requires that all PEG-funded partners in each community complete a DSS document to outline an implementation plan for HQPPs for eligible children. All quality criteria are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's QRIS, those outlined by NAEYC Accreditation and include the HQPP from the USDOE.

Explicit guidance on quality expectations from EEC is outlined in the DSS document and is intended to guide implementation plan development, driven by collaboration between the LEA and ELPs in each partnership, allowing for local level flexibility to ensure the plan addresses the unique needs of the community. All PEG grantee plans are submitted, and reviewed and approved by EEC staff on an annual basis.

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that is scheduled to occur on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to introduce and train subgrantees on the monitoring procedures we expected them to use twice a year with each of their ELPs. One formal monitoring visit occurred in the first year before EEC's audit of LEAs in the summer of 2016 and the initial audit in year two is finalized (with the exception of one LEA). The review and formal audit provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing technical assistance if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. EEC highlighted sound and innovative administration and management practices that were already in place.

As a follow-up to the monitoring process in year one, yearly meetings between the Commissioner of EEC, the Superintendent of the LEA and the executive leadership of the community based partners to discuss progress and maintain the connection with leadership in each community. These meetings proved to be beneficial in year one and are underway in year two.

### Regional Monitoring Teams

Three Regional Monitoring Teams (RMTs), one in each participating community, consist of an EEC Regional Director or designee, the regional staff currently responsible for oversight of related state grant activities and initiatives, and program licensors. The RMTs assess progress on grant milestones in each community and discuss specific successes and challenges as needed, while informing areas of focus in LEA audits of ELPs. RMT's discuss progress within the QRIS system, identification of potential barriers, and identifying technical assistance that may be required. EEC licensing staff participate to discuss any regulatory considerations, and offer a broad perspective of the organizations that are involved in PEG. The RMT's are fully implemented and will continue in Year 3.

### Local Partnerships

Local partnerships provide the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's plan. Each LEA serves as the state's subgrantee for funding. Each subgrantee community was chosen in part due the high level of needs of children. As a result, communities have experience serving children with high needs including English language learners, homeless children and children in foster care. Programs are able to continue the high quality services that they have always provided to these families.

- The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness has been used to provide guidance around the resident requirements for these programs. As of December, 27 of the children being served are known to be homeless, and instable housing and associated attendance problems have also been reported anecdotally across the communities.
- Grantees anecdotally report the increased number of children that are involved in the child welfare

system as participating in PEG in comparison to year one. As of December, 32 children enrolled are involved in the child welfare system.

These collaborations are expected to support program design, coordination of program activities and funding, and coordinated decision-making among the LEA and participating EEC-licensed programs. Through local collaboration, each community has addressed challenges in system alignment and have supported organized and focused planning for referral and enrollment systems, transition to kindergarten activities, the provision of comprehensive supports for children and families, and professional learning for educators and leadership.

Central to the success of these collaborations have been the clear structures and roles that have included opportunities for collaboration at multiple levels of program staff. The public school PEG coordinators have played a critical role in facilitating the partnerships with the EEC-licensed partner programs, managing the collaboration and ensuring that the shared vision and goals of the community organize the focus of the collaboration.

In all PEG communities, the primary mechanism for this collaboration was the creation of a steering committee with representation from the LEA and each EEC-licensed provider. In some communities, multiple subcommittees were formed to ensure communication at different levels of leadership, such as subcommittees of executive management and of center directors, as well as those planning for particular programmatic requirements of the grant, such as family engagement supports, curriculum choices, and professional development activities.

The collaborative decision making that has resulted has been important in the following areas:

- Considering how to improve access to prekindergarten for all children locally and integrating the PEG program into any local enrollment systems; they have also considered how best to reach families and manage referrals. In some communities the public school has used their kindergarten registration resources to manage such a system.
- Identifying key points of alignment to ensure smooth transition to kindergarten; these include aligned curriculum, familiarity with kindergarten expectations, conversations between PEG teachers and kindergarten teachers about classroom structures and expectations, and information to share with kindergarten teachers. They have also coordinated information sharing with parents about kindergarten enrollment and transition.
- Engaging in continuous quality improvement; these groups provide a platform to review program data and make decisions about program adjustments in response. Such efforts should build stronger and more consistent programming locally over time, although more support is needed to ensure that this work continues, as kindergarten and first grade data becomes available for review. A central focus of local data conversations include planning for professional development of educators and decision making around targeted services for children and families enrolled in the program.

After two years of implementations, the basic structure of the program and the roles of each partner have become fairly well defined. Management structures are in firmly in place and include the following components:

- **Executive management** - Boards or steering communities that include the executive leadership of the EEC-licensed programs and district staff meet quarterly in Boston and Lowell. In Lawrence, executive management is convened on an as-needed basis.
- **Program management** - Steering committees or management teams staffed by the program managers in each agency meet monthly in all communities. In Holyoke and Springfield, executive managers are included in these meetings when issues are being discussed that require their

attention.

- **Director meetings** - In Boston, the directors meet monthly. As the program has matured, Boston Public Schools has increasingly used these opportunities to provide technical support to the directors in order to build their capacity as instructional leaders. In Lawrence, the directors meet monthly with each other and the public school district's Early Childhood Director, who also coaches PEG teachers, to discuss program implementation.
- **Subcommittees** - In Lowell and Springfield, subcommittees are convened monthly for ongoing planning of particular program components, such as professional development and family engagement/ comprehensive services supports. These groups are staffed by program directors, other program and district staff working on these issues (such as coaches and family support staff) and PEG managers from all agencies. Other communities include these topics as part of other standing management meetings.
- **Superintendent- Commissioner Meetings** - EEC's Commissioner meets with the Superintendent of each community and the program leadership once a year to discuss lessons learned and plans for the future.

**Monitoring** - Each public school district conducts a programmatic and fiscal monitoring visit to every program twice a year. EEC then conducts a similar visit with the public school districts once a year, reviewing their program management and their monitoring processes and findings.

While details of coordinating sharing child assessment data between PEG and kindergarten teachers/ administrators is underway, some key components of transition to kindergarten activities are planned to include;

- Organized kindergarten registration events held jointly between PEG programs and the public schools
- Records review to ascertain if the PEG programs already have on file information that is needed for kindergarten registration that can be sent directly to the school district
- Planning for sharing of information between PEG teachers and kindergarten teachers

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

- In Boston, for example, a strong early childhood department that has invested a great deal in its own internal curriculum and professional development efforts has taken a leadership role in organizing joint professional learning activities, and supporting curriculum implementation through coaching
- Across all communities, the LEAs and ELPs are working together to organize professional development. Most communities are implementing subcommittees under the leadership of the EECs Workforce Specialist to organize their planning. By collaborating they can reduce costs of training and leverage existing resources more intentionally
- Some communities share consultants that provide comprehensive services to reduce costs and improve coordination
- Family engagement staff work together to offer joint family events

The collaborative approach and the ability to plan locally has allowed each community to think creatively about the best ways to build on prior collaborations in the community. The varied nature of

the programs in each community reflect the different landscape and needs in each. This flexibility has allowed for the braiding of PEG, subsidy and Head Start funding in Boston, which reduced the cost per child.

As the programs mature, the integration of services and opportunities to reduce costs through more efficient collaboration continue. Comprehensive services is one area that has proven more expensive for programs than originally planned. Some programs planned to use contractors with whom they already had relationships to provide services, but planning for jointly services continue. Some programs have pooled funds to hire staff collectively, or have funded public school staff, to serve as specialized therapists. Programs that share the same location have had greater success in sharing these services.

Additionally, the fact that the public schools, who provide services for children with IEPs, are part of the collaboration has supported conversations about the best ways to ensure children in community programs receive services.

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

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

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

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

The work of the advisory has resulted in valuable partnerships, and an unequivocal commitment to expanding our work and to ensure alignment with our vision for Birth to Grade 3 systems as outlined in *Building the Foundation of Future Success for Children from Birth through Grade 3*. Members of the Advisory Group has broadened its collaboration by participating in national technical assistance opportunities such as the workforce learning table sponsored through the BUILD Initiative and the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (2016 and 2017), a family engagement consortium sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers focused on supporting states to build a Birth through Grade 12 family engagement framework (2017-2018), and a K-3 Policy Academy supported by the Education Commission of the State to consider policy levers that states can consider implementing in the K-3 space that build on the work of its early childhood systems, birth to five. These varied national opportunities position the state agency staff to continue coordinating and collaborating in an effort to strengthen services in the infant, toddler and early elementary space and opens the opportunity to engage critical partners in the PEG planning.

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

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

upon goal of ensuring that education agencies worked to educate families about the benefits of preschool. Communities targeted outreach efforts to underserved and high need populations, including immigrant communities and homeless shelters.

PEG programs in four communities are located in various locations and provide access to services for families across the community. This has been largely successful, although looking forward, communities are evaluating the location of PEG programs to determine whether they might relocate certain PEG classroom locations to areas with a higher demand for services.

As mentioned in previous sections, EEC and ESE are working together to provide support to PEG grantees to consider ways in which they might adjust referral and placement processes at the local level to include more children with disabilities in PEG classrooms.

(b) The PEG team regularly attends local PEG meetings to monitor PEG implementation and to strategize when challenges arise. While no major concerns have arisen regarding increased costs for other programs serving young children, the PEG team is cognizant of the possible challenges and will work proactively to address them. Concerns about attention to infant/toddler services, workforce development, as well as ensuring that identification of Bachelor degree teachers for PEG doesn't destabilize other early childhood classrooms, remain of utmost importance.

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

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

Grantees report that to overcome the challenges of sharing specific developmental information about children as they transition to kindergarten, time must be spent making connections and building relationships with principals and other local elementary school administrators. Grantee communities are at various stages of connecting with these administrators, but there has been progress in smaller communities where it might be more likely the PEG program will know exactly what school a child will attend in kindergarten. For example, in Lawrence, ELPs have been paired with specific elementary schools that the current PEG children are likely to attend next year and they are engaging in a planning process to share administrative and developmental information to support the transition to kindergarten.

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

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

beyond.

As discussed above in the overview, we see this work as only being possible when local governance structures exist that allow for public and community-based preschool and kindergarten partners to collaborate together. Although this is complex issue, PEG programs are beginning to make more intentional connections with specific elementary schools and public school administrators.

(c) Plans for engaging parents and families in transitions between preschool and kindergarten are included as part of the grant's family engagement strategies. Each PEG community either has existing systems for engaging families in moving from preschool into kindergarten or they are collaboratively developing them as part of their PEG plans. Boston has a comprehensive approach to support all children in the city as they enter kindergarten; this initiative is called Countdown to Kindergarten. Other PEG communities have similar types of transition initiatives underway. Additionally, EEC in partnership with ESE, facilitated regional grantee meetings to enhance the coordination of grantee services, including local efforts to support families with the transition to kindergarten. Although some progress has been made to support these activities, this will remain an area of focus in year three and four.

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

(1) Child learning standards and expectations;

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

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

Massachusetts participated in a learning table sponsored by the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) and BUILD to focus on teacher preparation, credentials and workforce competencies in the B-3 space. The state team focused on moving forward a draft Birth to Grade 3 certification framework. The work of this state team will be linked to our state B-3 Advisory Group and PEG will benefit from the work of this group. As part of a broad workforce agenda, EEC is also evaluating and revising educator core competencies and categories of study that will inform credentialing moving forward. Additionally, MA engaged in a national, technical assistance opportunity, the K-3 Policy Academy sponsored through the Education Commission of the State. The focus of the K-3 policy academy is workforce development and seeks to align the workforce focus at EEC with K-3 to create a broader B-3 workforce agenda that engages EEC, ESE and the Department of Higher Education (DHE).

(3) Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment Systems

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

(4) Data systems; and

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

(5) Family engagement strategies

All of our PEG programs are required to use the Strengthening Families framework to guide its work around family engagement. PEG communities look to Head Start's family engagement framework to guide community and program level practices. As the state rolls out its PEG evaluation, plans for how to better understand family engagement practices and the impact of those practices on child and families has been reviewed and shared with grantees. Attention continues to be paid to identifying new ways that the resources of each program, the public schools and EEC can be leveraged to increase the connections with families of children three years old and younger and conveying to them information about the PEG programs and the importance of prekindergarten. Additionally, participation in CCSSO's Family Engagement Consortium provides our state with a unique opportunity to build a birth to Grade 12 family engagement framework that builds on the work of Early Intervention, home visiting, early education and care programs, including Head Start and the PEG program, with the K-12 system to ensure that families have consistent opportunities to build relationships and engage with educators and practitioners around their child's development and learning from the earliest years up through high school.

## 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*.

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

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

In state fiscal year 2018, the Commonwealth is spending \$49M in state dollars through Chapter 70 funding to support prekindergarten students. Of this, \$14.1M are allocated to the 5 communities where the PEG program is in place. This amount exceeds that \$5.9M required of PEG for the state match. EEC is able to claim these funds for our matching requirement for PEG Grant because no other agency, including ESE (the agency that administers Chapter 70), count these funds as a matching requirement towards any other programs.

### **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.

Massachusetts continues to build on the existing system framework for birth to grade three alignment efforts. Massachusetts has made intentional efforts to support the initial roll out PEG, and continues to work extensively with each grantee to plan and implement local birth through grade three efforts, monitoring their progress, and making recommendations for enhancing the work in future years of implementation.

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

- As described in earlier sections of this report our LEAs and ELPs worked diligently throughout the spring, summer and fall to actively reach out to hard-to-reach families to engage them in learning about PEG opportunities. In local meetings, communities continue to discuss strategies for improving their outreach to hard-to-reach families. These efforts include collaboration with CFCE grantees, as well as other community organizations that support early intervention services. Outreach to engage families who have children in early intervention programs was challenging in year one, partly due to the eligibility criteria of no prior formal education experience in PEG and the fact these children were frequently referred to inclusive preschool settings when they were three years old. In recognition of this challenge, and to support the enrollment of children coming from other education programs during the birth to grade three years, EEC provided flexibility to this requirement, allowing up to 20 percent of enrolled children to have had prior formal education experience (and 50 percent in Springfield).
- In the first two years of the grant, the PEG team began work with our state 619 coordinator, Head Start State Collaboration Office, ESE Early Learning team, and EEC inclusion specialist to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan with PEG communities (including ELPs, Head Start Disability Coordinators and public school early childhood special education staff) came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed in communities. This joint professional development will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the work of the early childhood field to successfully include children with disabilities in all settings, including community-based programs. This effort also features planning around placement of children with IEPs in PEG classrooms, and the provision of service delivery models for these children. PEG communities continue to engage in this work and are working toward locally driven goals outlined in action plans and supported through technical assistance at the local level.

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

#### Children with IEPs

While many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority of them have received their special education services in public school settings. As the PEG sites were identified and in many cases designed, communities were in a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings and many proposed collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff support children with disabilities. The partnership between district and ELPs has allowed them to build an infrastructure to properly refer children. LEA and ELP staff meet regularly and as part of these meetings, the communities have been building the process for referring children. These conversations also allow for community partners to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, if the child is identified as eligible.

#### Cross-sector Partnerships to Support Kindergarten Transitions and Alignment of Practice

Through PEG, the Commonwealth has an opportunity to strengthen formative assessment practices in the preschool and kindergarten space and to create better alignment in assessment practices and the transition of data between preschool and kindergarten. Towards this efforts, PEG communities are creating plans to share prekindergarten data in PEG classrooms with kindergarten teachers in the local public schools. This practice was challenging to implement in year one, and this remains an area of focus for year two and beyond.

In year two, some PEG communities have invested time in establishing relationships with local

elementary school principals as a strategy to enhance the coordination of kindergarten transition activities for families and collaboration between PEG programs and kindergarten educators. Additionally, All PEG communities are planning events to support families in the kindergarten registration process. In many cases, PEG communities are offering these events to families at various times and locations to provide increased access to support. Additionally, PEG programs are offering families' information about required documentation for the application process and resources about what to expect in kindergarten classrooms.

Targeted discussions about teaching and learning in the early elementary years and its alignment to approaches in prekindergarten are continuing to surface across the state. Although these conversations have surfaced in different ways in each community, and are at various stages of development, each highlight the trend toward cohesion in identifying and articulating a shared vision for classroom teaching and learning across the continuum. In some communities, discussions about the best ways to adapt and improve a shared curriculum have been the primary focus, while others have considered the implications of the CLASS observation tool for creating goals for both prekindergarten and kindergarten learning environments. All communities have also made time for discussions of the goals that teachers have for children as they enter kindergarten and the extent to which these goals are appropriate and supported by current programming.

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

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

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

As mentioned in earlier sections, and as described in great detail in the sections that follow, the Commonwealth Preschool Partnerships Initiative (the Planning Grant) has been funded by the State in fiscal year 2016 and 2017, providing a unique opportunity for existing PEG communities, and other communities interested in the PEG model, to plan for high quality preschool programming. Additionally, there are bills pending in the legislature - **An Act ensuring high quality early education,**” H.2874 filed by Representative Alice Peisch and S.240 filed by Senator Sal DiDomenico. If passed, these bills would provide funding for communities who have a plan to expand preschool.

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

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

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

ELP programs have been designed specifically to meet the PEG requirement of high quality (as

described in detail above.)

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

As of December 1, 2016, programs were serving 763 children as compared to the original target of 755. Ongoing enrollment and periodic child turnover continues to increase this number. Braiding of funding streams in Boston has also allowed that community to serve more children than originally planned and MA has identified 800 potential slots in PEG-funded programs each year.

## Section B: Budget Information

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

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

Expenditures are defined as money that has been liquidated, not money obligated or encumbered. Expenditures are funds that have been liquidated for services rendered between January 1 and December 31, 2017. Funds are considered obligated under two circumstances. The first is when year three funds have been encumbered in the state accounting system prior to December 31, 2017. For example, funds that have been encumbered in the state accounting system for year three include funds for the longitudinal system as well as funds in the contracts for the LEAs for year three of programming that began in September of 2017 and will end in August 2018. The other circumstance is that fund obligation includes personnel costs (payroll, associated fringe and indirect) which are considered obligated because staff are hired and we anticipate funding their positions throughout the entire grant period. It should be noted that personnel costs are not encumbered in the state accounting system.

The vast majority of the funds are encumbered through contracts, in particular contracts with LEAs for 95 percent of the funds. These contracts were put in place in August 2017 for services that the LEAs and ELPs (through subcontracts with the LEAs) would render between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2018. All year 3 PEG funds subgranted to the LEAs were to be used for services during this time period, so that PEG funds could be used to fund a full program year. In year two, EEC made a decision to move to a cost reimbursement process with LEAs and funds will not be paid to the LEA until invoices are submitted. As a result, EEC has only expended funds from the year 3 budget to cover EEC staff and fringe costs, travel costs, a small portion of the longitudinal evaluation and payment for the first three months of programming to LEAs. The bulk of the evaluation costs and the amounts subcontracted to the LEAs and budgeted for year three will not be spent until later in year three, as planned.

When we review our expenditures and encumbered funds for year three, we find that there is a discrepancy in state spending of \$548,052 based on the approved budget from August 2017 (this is currently in Grads360). There were some marginal changes in staffing that occurred in year three of the grant that contributed to the discrepancy, as Sarah Volkenant was on leave for four months in 2017, leaving some personnel and fringe funds unspent, and a reconciliation of the Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) spending claimed by ESE also has necessitated a reallocation of fringe funds across years 1-4. Additionally, the majority of the funds currently encumbered in a contract to Abt Associates for the PEG evaluation have not yet been spent, as the year 3 evaluation is planned to be conducted between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018. Indirect spending was lower than budgeted as a result and funds we were required to allocate for participation in technical assistance were not fully spent. Additional discrepancies in funds allocated to subgrantees are discussed in question 3 below.

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).

EEC submitted a budget amendment in August 2017 that was approved by the USDOE in August 25, 2017. The only changes we anticipate in our current budget amendment request are the following:

- Reduced personnel costs in Year 2 resulting from a maternity leave taken by one of the PEG staff.
- Small reallocation of fringe expenditures across years 1-4 as a result of expenditures through an ISA with ESE to cover the time spent by Donna Traynham on this grant.
- Changes in indirect spending resulting from all other changes discussed.
- Reconciliation of spending of the Year 2 funds indicated that grantees did not spend all of the funds allocated in Year 2 and these funds have been moved to Year 3 in the same line. As we are still disbursing Year 3 funds to grantees, we are only able to finalize the reconciliation of Year 2 expenditures.
- Finally, we did not use all of our budgeted funds “for grantee participation in technical assistance” in Year 3 and so would like to reallocate these funds as well.

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.

Central to EEC's planning for sustainability has been the review of strategic plans submitted by the communities who received planning grant funding in year one of the PEG programs. The purpose of the planning grant was to support communities in identifying the local infrastructure, funding and supports that would be needed to increase access to high quality preschool programs, addressing all the high quality components of PEG, to children ages 2.9 through kindergarten entry. Thirteen communities were awarded the Commonwealth Preschool Partnerships Initiative (the Planning Grant) in 2016, Athol, Brockton, Cape Cod, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, North Adams, Pittsfield, Somerville, Springfield and Worcester. The themes identified in these strategic plans were communicated to the MA legislature in the fall of 2016. The strategic plans documented strong need for both expanded access and quality improvements to early education opportunities for three and four year old children in the thirteen communities.

- Many communities noted the need to provide greater access to children not currently attending any formal early education program.
- All communities noted a strong need for affordable early education among families just over 200 percent of the poverty line and ineligible for any childcare subsidies, yet unable to bear the full cost.
- Transportation was noted as a need for families in all communities but only some included the provision of transportation in their plans; others looked at how programs might be distributed geographically to address this need.

All plans also noted the need for on-going professional development supports for educators, in addition to efforts to ensure a competent and well-educated workforce through degree requirements and other measures of competency for educators.

- On-going professional supports such as trainings, coaching and professional learning communities were considered in all plans.
- Efforts to develop pathways to degree attainment were included in many plans through collaboration with local institutions of higher education.
- Ways to increase educator compensation were considered as important to recruitment and retention, although not all plans committed to salaries commensurate with those in public schools.

The importance of collaboration between public schools, early education providers and other local stakeholders was acknowledged in all plans, both through the appreciation expressed for the value of

the collaborative planning process and the integration of such collaborations in the leadership and decision making structures.

- The public school was identified as the lead agent in all but one plan.
- All plans outlined collaborative management structures that included local early education providers.
- Many plans included an advisory group or steering committee to provide guidance to the community management, which included a broader group of stakeholders in the community, such as institutions of higher education and business leaders.
- The planning process provided the opportunity to develop a local system-wide vision for early education and effectively identify and deploy resources.

One consistent message conveyed by all planning grant communities was that the planning process was an essential step in building the relationships and shared vision that is needed to implement publicly funded preschool through a public-private mixed delivery system.

In response, the legislature including funding for planning grants in year two. These grants were used to provide new communities and opportunity to start the planning process or to support continued development of local plans to build in the specificity needed to transition to implementation and systematic feedback on the planning process to EEC. The themes of these plans were submitted in a report to the state legislature in early 2018. Strategic plans submitted to EEC by these communities focused on local needs and documented local efforts to simultaneously expand access while also building program quality components similar to Massachusetts' Preschool Expansion Grant model. Each community engaged their early education stakeholders in the planning process and proposed local governance structures for expanding preschool through a public/private partnership design. Grantees were required to develop plans that considered both expansion with their existing financial resources and with additional funding and supports. Activities that the grantees proposed with current resources included joint professional development opportunities, aligned curriculum, and developmental screening of children. Activities that the grantees said would be feasible with additional resources included the expansion of prekindergarten seats offering a variety of schedules, coordinated enrollment, family support services, behavioral health consultation, educator coaching, salaries commensurate with public schools that would help to attract and retain highly qualified educators, and pipeline programs with local community colleges.

In reviewing both the most recent planning grants, communities have clearly expressed the need for expansion of access to prekindergarten seats, noting large numbers of children entering kindergarten without any prior early education experiences and detailing the cost and logistical barriers to families to accessing these programs. The planning grants have provided a much desired catalyst for communities to build local collaborations in support of the expansion and alignment of early education opportunities. The strategic plans that have resulted provide powerful road maps for the multitude of ways a community might build a mixed delivery system across public and private programs to coordinate prekindergarten access. At the same time, it is clear that while some alignment can be developed within current funding levels, the full implementation of these plans to expand access require additional funds.

EEC is also supporting continued conversations about sustainability in each of the PEG communities. Each year, the Commissioner of EEC meets with each school district Superintendent and the executive leadership of the ELPs to discuss the PEG program and local plans for preschool expansion. A primary topic of conversation at this year's meetings, which occurred in early 2018, was the lessons learned from PEG and how these lessons are shaping the communities' plans for preschool expansion when PEG funding ends. Each community has engaged in its own planning for sustainability locally, and EEC is encouraging communities to think about how to blend local, state and federal funds to support a

mixed delivery model. Each year, the Commissioner of EEC meets with Superintendent of each participating public school district and the local PEG leadership teams. In Year 3, local partners have begun to raise questions about how to advocate for additional state funding to sustain PEG programming after the federal grant period. Toward this goal, LEAs invited local elected officials including state representatives and city mayors to participate in these meetings to begin local discussions around sustainability. Communities discussed the critical components of their PEG programs and the impact on children and families. In each community, parents of children enrolled in the PEG program made statements about the personal impact on their family, citing the value of the program in supporting the needs of the entire family.

In Boston, the Mayor's Office and BPS have been working for the past few years on their own needs assessment and planning process. Mayor Walsh recently announced a commitment to universal prekindergarten and proposed a change in the use of Convention Center funds that would provide the city the necessary funds. Acknowledging that Boston does not have a problem of access, but one of quality, the planning team is developing a system for both expanding seats in the high-quality BPS program and continuing to build community-based programs' quality capacity. Planning for implementation continues, and local stakeholders consistently integrate lessons learned from PEG in planning for future efforts.

EEC also continues to work closely with the state legislature as they discuss the feasibility of state funding for universal prekindergarten. EEC has reported to the legislature on both the findings of the year one and two evaluation of the PEG programs and the results of the strategic plans submitted as a result of the preschool planning grants. The continued planning grant funding in year two reflects the legislature's commitment to this issue.

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 PEG grant is structured to support programs in running from September to August, resulting in a delay in spending from year to year. Although the grant year 3 has ended, programs are still in the middle of their planned expenditures of these funds. Additionally, in the last two years, programs have encountered periodic challenges in hiring staff and when positions fall open, they may remain open for a period of time, leading to unspent funds. While these funds have always been allocated by the subgrantees to other needed services in their communities to enrich the program, these services generally are planned for the following program year.

As of December 2017, all year three funds have been obligated. However, due to the program design and length of the program year, we do not expect liquidation until later in 2018 to cover all costs of implementation of year three of the program.