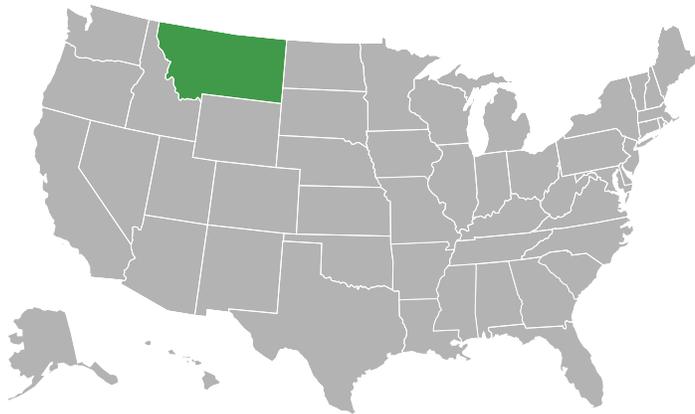


PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

FY2017 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Montana



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 #: S419A150015 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 16

3. Project Title: Preschool Development Grant- Development

4. Grantee Name: Montana Office of Public Instruction

5. Grantee Address: 1227 11th Ave.

City: Helena State: Montana Zip: 59620

6. Project Director Name: Tara Ferriter-Smith

Title: Project Director

Phone #: (406) 444-0758 Ext.: _____ Fax #: (406) 444-3924

Email Address: tferriter@mt.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	\$10,208,034.00	\$2,280,503.00
b. Current Budget Period	\$9,958,741.00	\$6,113,497.00
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: 01/01/2017 To: 06/30/2018
- 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: MT

PR/Award #: S419A150015

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.

Overview

In 2014, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services awarded Montana a Preschool Development Grant. With the funding from this grant, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) with the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) embarked on a four-year mission to “develop, enhance, and expand high-quality preschool programs so that more children from low- and moderate-income families enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.” Now in the third the year of Preschool Development Grant implementation, Montana continues to expand access to High-Quality preschool in high-needs communities across the state and has experienced success in the following goals.

- Expanding the number of children served by High-Quality preschool programs across the state.
- Expanding the number of children in high-needs communities who are ready for kindergarten.
- Enrolling Montana Preschool Development Grant (MPDG) children into Montana's longitudinal data system.
- Use data-driven approaches to build and strengthen early childhood programs that represent and serve the unique needs of the children and families in the communities they serve.
- Developing and strengthening Montana's early childhood workforce.

Accomplishments and Highlights

Increased Number of Children Served

Prior to the implementation of the (MPDG), the state did not have a comprehensive statewide, state-funded early childhood program. Efforts were largely localized and worked independently from one another. Through the activities of the MPDG, the state has strengthened its infrastructure to support early childhood efforts. The OPI, DPHHS, School Districts, and Head Starts have improved their collaboration and communication over the last three years. These partnerships have been critical in the success of the MPDG and will continue to be vital to the state's future early childhood efforts.

As a direct result of the MPDG's efforts, Montana has continued to increase the number of Eligible Children served in high-quality preschool programs across the state. The project saw an increase of 31 percent from year two to year three, raising the number of Eligible Children served to 1,000. The number of High-Quality classrooms also increased from 57 to 76 in 46 communities across the state. Not all children enrolled in MPDG programs met the definition of eligibility; some do not meet the age or income requirements, or the program is unable to obtain the services of an EC teacher with a bachelor's degree. While these children may be deemed “ineligible” by PDG grant requirements, they are still being impacted by the grant. When these children are included, the number of children the MPDG is directly impacting raises to 1,323 children preschool aged children.

Increased Number of Children Ready for Kindergarten

In the first year of implementation, 340 children were determined to be ready to succeed in kindergarten, 70 percent of children. In the following year 487 children were determined ready to succeed in kindergarten, 73 percent of children. The addition of new implementing cohorts did not have a deleterious effect on readiness, and the state expects to see overall gains in next spring's DIAL collection.

Increased Quality in Programs

To monitor effective implementation of grant requirements, and to provide programs and classrooms with useful data, MPDG programs participate in annual assessments. Each fall, participating programs receive two assessments, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Third Edition (ECERS-3), and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). ECERS is used to assess the quality of programs and classrooms (the MPDG uses a sampling of classrooms on this measure). CLASS is used to assess the effectiveness of interactions among teachers and children in the classroom (every MPDG classroom receives an annual CLASS observation). These scores, and other data are then used by programs' Leadership Teams and classroom staff to inform continuous improvement cycles, update action plans, set teaching goals, and in overall program evaluation.

Project-wide, ECERS data show all subscales either at or above the state average (as determined by the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, STARS). And the CLASS observation results outperform the national Head Start scores in two CLASS domains with the MPDG scoring 6.2 in Emotional Support (6.0 nationally) and 3.6 in Instructional Support (3.0 nationally). In the third domain, MPDG is just below the national average with 5.7 in Classroom Organization (5.8 nationally). These scores, especially in Instructional Support, are evidence of the positive effects the State Implementation Team's efforts are having on building and developing High-Quality preschool programs.

The success of these scores can be attributed to the expanded use and understanding of the Montana Preschool Standards, investment in professional development, buy-in from program leadership and teachers, and the systematic analysis of data by the State Team and programs.

The data provided by these assessments allow programs and their supporting State Implementation Team members to identify areas in need of improvement as well as to celebrate and build on successes. These areas of improvement are addressed through a continuous improvement cycle and action planning. At the project level, the State Team uses these data to inform project-wide professional development needs, identify gaps in implementation and direct resources to address those needs.

While the long-term outcomes of the project are still many years away from evaluation, the short-term outcomes have largely been successful. Montana expects to see continued and sustained success in program quality measures.

Longitudinal Data System

The MPDG was successful in enrolling Eligible Children into the Achievement in Montana (AIM), Montana's longitudinal data system. Use of the AIM system allows for more precise data collection for the grant. It also provides the state with an accurate picture of child demographics to ensure better delivery of services and inform planning. In addition, by enrolling all MPDG children in AIM, the long-term outcomes of the grant can be measured.

Strengthening Montana's Early Childhood Workforce

Montana has identified early childhood EC workforce development as a key grant activity in building and sustaining quality preschool programs in the state. The state has pursued this goal through on-site and regional trainings, on-site coaching, cultivating family-teacher partnerships, the annual Summer Institute Conference, and through financial assistance for higher education coursework. These activities are designed to raise the professionalization of Montana's EC field, recruit and retain a quality EC workforce, and increase and improve quality EC services to all of Montana's young children.

To date, the MPDG has provided 10,500 hours of on-site coaching and training hours, and thus far the two Summer Institutes have delivered over 22,000 hours of training to Montana's PDG EC professionals.

Program staff help guide professional development offerings through survey responses, collaboration with supporting State Team members, and analysis of their program data. This has proven effective in delivering professional development opportunities that programs want and need. For example, through this process,

many programs identify classroom and behavior management as being key to successful learning in the classroom and to mitigating teacher turnover. This latter issue will be examined more closely by the State Team in the coming year. Anecdotal evidence suggests that through these social-emotional trainings provided to teachers to support this goal gave teachers the tools they need to effectively manage their classrooms. The school readiness data collected bears this out, with potential behavior delay observations falling from 24% to 11 percent from spring 2016 to spring 2017.

In addition to coaching, training, and other professional development opportunities. The MPDG has, to-date, provided financial assistance to 190 EC professionals to pursue early childhood-related degrees and endorsements. Beginning in 2018, the state will require all Pre-K teachers in its public school system to have an early childhood related bachelor's degree or higher, or the Preschool Grade 3 (P-3) Early Childhood Education Endorsement.

Though significant progress has been made on this goal, more work remains to be done because Montana still does not have enough qualified teachers to serve its needs, especially in more rural areas. The MPDG will continue to focus on developing a professional and stable EC workforce in the state.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The greatest challenge facing early childhood in Montana is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in more remote, rural areas. Montana's sheer size and small population, around a million people, means that qualified workforce pools are small and far apart. This shortage affected the number of high-quality classrooms some communities could provide. A significant demand for qualified staff exists across the state, and will only increase with new state and Head Start workforce requirements.

The MPDG sought to address this shortfall through higher education financial assistance to help EC professionals obtain the necessary coursework, endorsements, and degrees to continue in the field. However, the demand has been higher than expected and outstripped the original funds set aside. Thanks to supplemental grant funds, this pool of money has been secured for another semester for those students enrolled from PDG communities. The demand for such assistance will remain high after the life of the grant.

Conclusion

The Montana Preschool Development Grant has been successful in providing increased services for children in high-needs communities, building and strengthening quality EC programs across the state, and in developing the competencies and skills of the Montana EC workforce. Positive outcomes of these efforts are born out in the increased number of Montana children on track to succeed in kindergarten, the increased quality indicators in participating programs, and the delivery of professional development opportunities to Montana's EC workforce.



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: MT PR/Award #: S419A150015

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.

The (MPDG) Implementation Team provides Subgrantees ongoing support uniquely adapted to each program's needs and the needs of their communities. These concerted efforts resulted in an increase in the number of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs for each implementation year of the MPDG. The number of Eligible Children served expanded by 301 children in year two, with an additional 237 children served in year three for a total of 1,000 Eligible Children served in year 3 (a 116% increase from year one). The State PDG Team implemented the activities outlined in the Montana Preschool Development Grant providing support to date for a total of 22 Subgrantees. This continued support has allowed the number of classrooms implementing High-Quality standards in these Subgrantee programs has risen from 27 classrooms in year one, to 57 classrooms in year two, and 76 classrooms in year three.

During the inaugural year of the MPDG (2015-2016 academic year), 12 Subgrantees participated in the grant, implementing High-Quality criteria in 27 classrooms. In addition, 16 classrooms received support in developing infrastructure to successfully implement the High-Quality standards for the following academic year. During the 2016-2017 school year, the MPDG added six additional Subgrantees, raising the number of High-Quality classrooms to 57. With the addition of three new Subgrantees in the third implementation year, the total number of Subgrantees stands at 22, implementing High-Quality standards in 76 classrooms. Although the state did not meet the projected target of serving 1,613 children in year three, the 22 Subgrantee programs delivered High-Quality early childhood care and education to 1,000 children, an increase of 116 percent from year one of the project.

Implementation Year	Projected	# of Subgrantees	# of Classrooms	Eligible Children Served
2015-2016	1,138	12	27	462
2016-2017	1,613	18	57	763
2017-2018	1,613	22	76	1000

This increase can be attributed to the continuing work of the State Implementation Team. The State Implementation Team is composed of specialists and professionals across a number of early childhood and education disciplines. Each Subgrantee program receives the dedicated support of State Implementation Team members. These Team members guide Subgrantee programs in understanding and implementing the components of High-Quality (as defined by the MPDG and in Montana Preschool Program Standards), developing workforce skill and stability, building program capacity, improving classroom instruction, supporting family and community partnerships, and raising awareness of the benefits of quality early care and education in their communities.

These specialists work with their program leadership to develop and strengthen program-wide infrastructure, adopt systematic data collection, and engage in action planning targeted at the development of effective

Program Leadership Teams. These measures ensure continuous improvement by providing guidance and information critical to addressing barriers to delivering High-Quality standards experiences to as many children in as many classrooms as possible. State specialists also support program leadership with family engagement and community outreach, as well as increase accessibility to comprehensive services for children, and promote evidence-based health and safety standards.

In the classroom, state specialists provide coaching so teachers can effectively deliver evidence-based curricula, and to ensure that instruction is developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically responsive. They also work with staff to adopt strategies for using ongoing formative assessment data to inform teaching practice, and to provide individualized supports and accommodations so all children can fully participate in learning opportunities.

All program staff receive High-Quality professional development delivered through a variety of approaches. MPDG staff from all programs attended a Summer Institute Conference in July 2015, July 2016, and August 2017 to gain shared understanding about important strategies for implementation of the High-Quality components of the Montana Preschool Program Standards. Each year professional development opportunities offered at the Summer Institute were informed by project level data as well as specific Subgrantee needs. State Implementation Team members followed-up with on-site job-embedded technical assistance and professional development to continue and build on that learning.

In addition to the annual Summer Institute Conference, Subgrantees also receive targeted professional development through site-based and regional trainings throughout the year. These professional development opportunities included workshops and training for Conscious Discipline, coaching, The Pyramid Model, early literacy skills, the Montana Early Learning Standards (content standards), and leadership.

These supports have led to the increased capacity of the state of Montana to serve Eligible Children.

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.

Currently it is estimated that about 4.6 percent of Montana's four year-old children receive special education services through IDEA Part B, Section 619. As this number is less than the national average of 6.4 percent, Montana has set the national number of 6.4% as its target. Pursuing this target involved ongoing communication with Subgrantees about their role and responsibility in serving those Eligible 4 year-old children, providing professional development opportunities for MPDG program staff, and coordinating with the local Early Childhood coalitions to support those MPDG programs and their families. Currently the percentage of income eligible four year-old-children enrolled in MPDG classrooms receiving services through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 7.0 percent.

Subgrantees agreed to address the needs of Eligible Children who may be in need of additional supports, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays, children who are English Learners, children who reside on Indian Lands, children who are homeless, children who are involved in the child welfare system, and children who are from military families. The State Implementation Team provided support to staff to fully include Eligible Children with disabilities in participating High-Quality Preschool Programs by providing opportunities for ongoing professional learning. Each year at the annual Summer Institute Conference, several training sessions aimed at supporting students with disabilities were offered. All instructional program staff and Program Leadership Team members were required to attend the Summer Institute Conference. Programs also received five to eight days ongoing on-site support each month from their assigned State Implementation Team Members, which included learning about optimizing cost measures, engagement and support for families

of Eligible Children with Disabilities, offering comprehensive services, age-appropriate accommodations designed to meet the needs of Eligible Children with Disabilities, sharing of data consistent with federal and state law, and utilizing community based resources.

Montana has a strong network of local early childhood coalitions that are receiving infrastructure support from the PDG grant who work collaboratively with MPDG Subgrantees to facilitate family outreach to provide comprehensive support for children. These coalitions support the work of preschool in multiple ways. One significant element of support provided by many of the coalitions is their active participation in community child find activities, screenings, and assessments for school readiness. Often these interactions are the first steps in connecting services with families of children with disabilities or special needs. The community coalition meetings bring a large group of Early Childhood stakeholders together on a monthly basis to coordinate services to families as well as making sure that the community resources are promoted, available, and up-to-date for families to use when needed. Among a few of the members that participate in the meetings, are county health departments, home visiting programs, Part C providers, mental health providers, and school personnel. Each of these entities play an important role in providing comprehensive services to children with disabilities.

Each MPDG Subgrantee is required to hire a full time Family Engagement Coordinator who participates in the coalition meetings, if their community has an established coalition. By actively attending these meetings, Family Engagement Coordinators are able to support a more robust and comprehensive service plan in their programs, focusing on nutrition, health screenings, and social emotional supports.

Specialists from the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) support the development of the work of the Family Engagement Coordinator as well as the coalitions in their area. Each of these specialists are working to ensure the subgrantees have comprehensive child health services as an integral part of their family engagement plans. In addition, they are charged with developing a transition plan for children moving from preschool and/or childcare to their kindergarten setting. These transition services have proven to be vital to a successful transition and a positive school experience for children and their families.

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

MPDG Subgrantees have made substantial progress in building and expanding High-Quality preschool programming, increasing the number of Eligible Children served in PDG classrooms from zero to 1,000 since the first year of implementation. Each year of implementation saw a marked increase in the number of children served, increasing by 65 percent in year two, 31 percent in year three, and 116 percent overall from year one to year three.

Implementation	Year Projected	# of Subgrantees	# of Classrooms	Eligible Children Served
2015-2016	1,138	12	27	462
2016-2017	1,613	18	57	763
2017-2018	1,613	22	76	1,000

The adoption of the Montana Preschool Program Standards by the Montana Board of Public Education has had a major impact on the increased number of children served by High-Quality programs. These standards, which went into effect July 1, 2015, hold Preschool Programs to a High-Quality standard reflecting best practices. The MPDG State Implementation Team has also provided targeted support and professional development to assist Subgrantees in implementing these standards, including use of continuous improvement cycles and action planning. These efforts ensured that High-Quality implementation was being adopted by wide range of programs and classrooms. Surveys conducted with PDG stakeholders provide evidence that the State Implementation Team and preschool staff members regularly use the standards for a variety of purposes, including professional development and training, planning, and monitoring. Educators reported using a component of the Preschool Program Standards, the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS), to ensure the standards were addressed in their curriculum and were aligned to other standards, such as those required by Head Start.

The Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) also adopted new preschool teacher education and licensure requirements that includes educator licensure rules governing the types of licenses and endorsements available and the process by which teachers obtain their licenses. The BPE also adopted new Educator Preparation Program Standards. These standards are used by institutions of higher education to prepare early childhood educators and design early childhood programs of study; assess student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and determine an early childhood higher education program's effectiveness. These too went into effect July 1, 2015. A component of Montana's infrastructure building plan is to offer personnel within the High Needs Communities the opportunity to apply for financial assistance to attain a P-3 endorsement in accordance with these new educator rules. From fall 2015 through fall 2017, 635 people within identified High Needs Communities received financial assistance through the PDG grant to increase the skill level and quality of the EC workforces in these communities.

The State Team conducted desk audits and on site monitoring for Cohort I programs in the spring of 2016 to better understand the depth of implementation of these High-Quality standards and to ensure compliance with Montana Preschool Program Standards. All Program Leadership Teams utilize the Self-Assessment tool that outlines key subcomponents of the Montana Preschool Program Standards to evaluate their implementation of the Program Standards as part of an ongoing continuous improvement process. The State Implementation Team members utilize this information combined with student outcome measures, Measures of Environmental Quality (ECERS), and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions (CLASS), and child-level formative assessment data to guide decision making through an ongoing continuous improvement action planning process.

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.

MPDG had provided the only state-funded preschool slots in Montana up until this point. Temporary state legislation, passed in the spring of 2017, has added \$6 million over the biennium to fund the STARS Preschool Pilot program through DPHHS. The STARS program is in its first year of implementation and has adopted the same criteria for High Quality as the PDG. STARS has increased the number of children served in state funded preschool by 302 in the 2016-2017 school year for a combined total of 1,283 children served during the 2017-2018 school year between the two programs.

To address demand for early childhood education, and lacking designated state funding, it has been common practice in Montana for School District and Head Start Programs to utilize a combination of federal funding sources such as Head Start, Title I, Impact Aid, Special Education as well as some state General Funds to provide educational services to preschool-aged children and families in their communities. In FY 2015, 1,620 3 to 5 year-old children were receiving special education services of which 578 were four year old children. In FY 2016, 1,592 3 to 5 year-old children were receiving special education services of which 533 were four year old children. This year, 1,697 three to five year old children are receiving special education services of which 568 are four year old children.

The state has made an investment in early care and education through the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. This voluntary, tiered quality improvement and rating system outlines achievable criteria that early childhood programs can attain to improve the quality of their educational and support services. The State Legislature has also identified performance based, "one-time only" funds to be given to qualifying early childhood programs for meeting certain quality benchmarks. Currently 232 programs are involved in STARS to Quality providing quality care for 7,154 young children.

To improve the quality of educators in Montana's preschool programs, on July 1, 2015, the BPE adopted two new Administrative Rules of Montana, found in Chapters 57 and 58 respectively. The first rule outlined preschool teacher education and licensure requirements, governing the types of licenses and endorsements available and how preschool teachers can apply for and renew their licenses. The second, outlines standards used by institutions of higher education to better prepare early childhood educators. The standards guide the design of effective early childhood programs of study. They help to assess student knowledge, skills, and dispositions and, lastly, help early childhood higher education programs evaluate their own effectiveness. To increase the number of highly qualified preschool teachers in the state, the MPDG Financial Assistance Opportunities for Career Advancement program has provided assistance to 635 individuals from identified High-Needs Communities. Enrolled students are working towards four outcomes, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, the P-3 endorsement, or a special education endorsement. To date 190 people have received financial assistance to attend college courses which is contributing to the development of a much needed EC workforce in MT and assisted in expanding high quality early childhood access.

The state is further building capacity for state slots through the Governor's Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC), which is an advisory board to the Governor on issues related to early childhood. One goal of this advisory group is to improve collaboration and coordination across the spectrum of governmental and nonprofit organizations providing early childhood services. The BBAC focuses on the multiple systems that impact young children and families, that include early childhood programs, physical and mental health services, family support, and parent education. The stakeholders in the BBAC represent these organizations and many others from around the state.

Springing from the BBAC, the local Best Beginnings Coalitions have been created to support community efforts. Ten of the 20 coalitions are located in targeted High-Need Communities. Each coalition tasks itself with rallying local community members around early childhood issues, and their presence has also facilitated system building capacity and service delivery. For example, early childhood home visiting services have been established in one coalition community. Local Best Beginnings Coalitions are instrumental in collaborating with Subgrantees in High-Need Communities to ensure Eligible Children have the services and supports to attain the essential kindergarten readiness skills outlined in the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS). The MPDG and

a National Governor's Association Grant worked in collaboration, guided by state leadership to develop *The Montana Early Learning Roadmap: A Community Framework*. This document describes how local school districts, preschool providers, Head Starts, social service agencies and families have come together to expand early learning opportunities. The sustainability of the coalitions will be paramount in moving preschool efforts forward in Montana.

Coalitions also assist in connecting families with Eligible Children to available PDG slots in their communities. All local coalitions conducted Community Needs Assessments in December 2015. The information was used to identify Eligible Children in their communities who were not receiving services in a High-Quality Preschool Program. Based on the individual community results, coalitions modified their 2016 strategic plan to coordinate with stakeholders in identifying and placing eligible children. Coalitions will conduct annual Community Needs Assessments and PDG participants use this information to inform recruitment efforts to ensure eligible families are aware of available PDG slots and Eligible Children are receiving services.

Collaborative, community efforts were very successful in increasing the number of Eligible Children being served in many Subgrantee programs. Community members, MPDG leadership, local coalitions, and Subgrantees have worked together to accurately identify a given community's potential number of Eligible Children and have made targeted efforts to place them. Communities used a variety of community specific media to reach Eligible Children, from radio and newspaper advertisements to banners and flyers. The media outreach was focused on the benefits and importance of high quality early education on brain development. Because these approaches have been so successful, we plan to continue and expand these efforts to locate and place Eligible Children.

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.

A work group of early childhood stakeholders from the Governor's Best Beginnings Advisory Council developed a definition of school readiness for Montana's children. They defined it as "a child's readiness to have sustained successful learning experiences that can be achieved when families, communities, early learning programs, and schools support readiness. This is achieved by providing experiences and rich environments which increase the child's development in emotional/social, physical, communication and cognitive skills. These early experiences set the foundation for the child's successful future growth and development." The PDG grant activities support these readiness objectives and to measure success as it pertains to child outcomes, the BBAC work group chose the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Fourth Edition (DIAL-4) global screener as a valid and reliable means of determining school readiness as a Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool.

The DIAL-4's Performance areas align with the PDG's prescribed five Essential Domains of School Readiness and the MELS.

Alignment of Essential Domains of School Readiness, MELS, and DIAL

Essential Domains of School Readiness

MELS

DIAL Performance Area

Language and Literacy

Communication

Language

Cognition and General Knowledge

Cognition

Concepts

Approaches Toward Learning

Cognition

Concepts

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

Physical

Motor

Emotional and Social Development

Emotional and Social

Behavior

Administration of the DIAL-4

PDG programs are required to participate in the assessment in those classrooms receiving grant funding. The DIAL-4 is administered in the spring of the preschool year to children bound for kindergarten in the fall to determine their readiness to succeed in an academic setting. Many of the children in the MPDG preschool programs disperse in the fall to many different schools for kindergarten so, for practicality's sake, the stakeholder group determined spring to be the appropriate time to gather readiness data.

To ensure data validity, Montana hired and trained a dedicated assessment team to administer the DIAL-4 assessment. Before the assessments, assessors are trained so the administration of the DIAL-4 is standardized across the project. During the assessments, a Lead Assessor is on site to oversee the administration of the tool to confirm valid and reliable results. Upon conclusion of the spring assessments, the State team reviews the data looking for consistency and accuracy across the results. This process informs the following year's assessor training.

Once all data are collected, program and classroom specific reports are prepared by the state Data Analyst and distributed to programs. With support of the State Team, these data are used at both the program and classroom level to inform goals, planning, instruction, and the readiness of the children exiting their program for kindergarten. In years three and four, the State PDG Assessment Team will provide on site support to program level staff in administering the assessment. In an effort to sustain the practice of using this tool and of gathering reliable data program staff are being trained to administer the tool and interpret the results.

The MPDG Implementation Team will conduct DIAL-4 assessments in the spring of 2018 and in the spring of 2019. After the life of the MPDG, the responsibility of assessment will be up to the local districts and Head Start Programs.

Kindergarten Readiness

The MPDG determines Kindergarten Readiness through the DIAL-4 assessment tool. DIAL is a screening tool used to identify those children in the early years who are at risk of failing in an academic setting, or in need of diagnostic assessment and intervention. The assessment includes performance areas that align with the PDG prescribed Essential Domains of School Readiness.

A child's score on the DIAL-4 is converted to an age-based percentile rank established by a national normative sample. This percentile ranking is used to identify those children who are at risk of failing in an academic setting, and those children with potential developmental delays. The MPDG State Team, with recommendations from early childhood stakeholders and following the guidelines established in the DIAL-4 manual, set the cutoff score at the sixteenth percentile (one standard deviation below the mean DIAL total score) as being at risk for failing in an academic setting. The MPDG determines those at the seventeenth percentile and higher as being "on track" for kindergarten with those below as "not on track" for kindergarten. Children scoring at the seventh percentile or below are designated as having a Potential Developmental Delay and are referred for diagnostic screening and assessment.

Update on DIAL Scoring

During the analysis of DIAL scores from spring 2017, it was determined that the spring 2016 analysis had relied on a different formula for calculating DIAL scores than the one prescribed by Pearson, creators of the DIAL-4. This previous formula required a screened child to score above the cutoff score in each of the three performance areas (Motor, Concepts, and Language) to be considered "on track." DIAL-4 prescribes that, to be considered "on track," a child's total DIAL score must be above the cutoff score. A child need not be proficient

in all three performance areas in order to be "on track" overall. The State Implementation team, with guidance from the state's newly hired Data Analyst, made this change to better reflect the DIAL's intended usage.

Recalculating year one results, the DIAL-4 total scores for screened Eligible Children in spring 2016 showed 70 percent not at risk of failing in an academic setting, with 340 of 488 children screened. This updated calculation will be the one the MPDG uses throughout the life of the grant.

DIAL Data Year 2

Year two's DIAL-4 total scores showed 73 percent of screened Eligible Children were developmentally on track and not at risk of failing in an academic setting, 487 of 668 children screened. The percentage of children on track increased by 3 percentage points, and the number increased (340 to 487) as many new implementing programs were brought in to the grant.

In addition, to these scores, the DIAL-4 includes observations for potential behavior delays. During the spring 2016, 24 percent of screened children were recorded as having a potential behavior delay. By the data collection of spring 2017 that number had fallen to 11 percent.

As discussed, the DIAL-4 recommends using the total score to measure readiness; however, a breakout of each performance area score provides valuable information to the project to inform professional development offerings, identify coaching opportunities, and drives planning. In reviewing the scores, the motor development performance area had the highest percentage on track, and the language performance area has the lowest percentage (n= 668). These data are recorded in tables below with discussion following.

MPDG Project-Wide Spring 2016 to Spring 2017

<u>DIAL Performance Area</u>	<u>On Track 2016</u>	<u>On Track 2017</u>	<u>Not On Track 2016</u>	<u>Not On Track 2017</u>
Motor	67%	76%	33%	24%
Concepts	71%	72%	29%	28%
Language	69%	68%	31%	32%

There is also a difference in total DIAL scores between implementing cohorts.

DIAL-4 Total Scores by Cohort-Spring 2016 to Spring 2017

<u>Cohort</u>	<u>On Track 2016</u>	<u>On Track 2017</u>	<u>Not On Track 2016</u>	<u>Not on Track 2017</u>
Cohort 1	78%	80%	22%	20%
Cohort 2	56%	65%	44%	35%
Cohort 3	N/A	69%	N/A	31%

Scores across the DIAL performance areas show an uneven distribution between implementing cohorts.

DIAL-4 On Track in DIAL Performance Areas by Cohort-Spring 2016 to Spring 2017

<u>Cohort</u>	<u>Motor 2016</u>	<u>Motor 2017</u>	<u>Concepts 2016</u>	<u>Concepts 2017</u>	<u>Language 2016</u>	<u>Language 2017</u>
Cohort 1	70%	81%	78%	79%	78%	79%
Cohort 2	62%	68%	60%	66%	55%	59%
Cohort 3	N/A	77%	N/A	65%	N/A	58%

By gender, 78 percent of females are on track and 68 percent of males are. More males (358) were assessed in spring 2017 than females (310) and generally there are more males enrolled in MPDG classrooms than females.

DIAL-4 On Track in DIAL Performance Areas by Sex

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Motor</u>	<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Language</u>
Female	82%	76%	72%

Male 71% 68% 64%

These scores also reflect the cohort differences, as many of the MPDG programs located on tribal lands joined the program in Cohort 3.

DIAL Total Score by Race/Ethnicity-Spring 2017

<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>On Track</u>	<u>Not on Track</u>
American Indian (296)	61%	39%
White (327)	84%	16%
Hispanic/Latino (23)	61%	39%

*Seventeen other children were recorded as "other" or "two or more races."

The DIAL total scores between cohorts illustrates the time needed for programs in implementing the grant. Earlier implementers have higher, more even scores across all domains, and cohorts who joined later and have received a fraction of the professional learning generally have lower, more uneven scores across domains. In reviewing this data, the State Implementation Team has determined targeted goals for increasing child outcomes, especially in the language and literacy, and cognition domains. The State expects to see growth in all domain areas across all cohorts over the next two years as a result of the targeted professional development that is planned.

Based on these results, the State Implementation Team is providing coaching and professional development opportunities around language and literacy, including offering regional trainings with Lucy Hart Paulson, national literacy expert. The State Team has also pursued English language support. Montana is unique in that 42% of eligible children enrolled in the PDG are American Indian children. The state understands that children who reside on tribal lands have a language of impact other than English. The MPDG and the state of Montana have begun providing intensive support and technical assistance to program leadership and classroom teaching staff that includes instructional strategies to better support children and families around academic English language acquisition. As a result of this support and professional development, there has been an increase in the use of dialogic interactive reading and sentence stems, modeling language, and providing quality feedback in MPDG classrooms.

Montana continues to keep increased awareness and application of the Montana Early Learning Standards as a focal point of the grant as these serve all domains of child development. Survey results from programs and feedback from State Implementation Team members indicates better understanding and application of the MELS in program and classroom practice.

While physical well-being and motor development is the highest and most evenly scored domain across the cohorts, the MPDG will continue to support child development in this domain by providing funding to programs to purchase additional large motor skills equipment and toys, as well as gym and playground equipment as needed.

Montana endeavors to continue building child development in the cognition and general knowledge domain through the focused use of coaching and training to support student-directed learning, high order thinking skills, and executive function.

Since the beginning of grant implementation, programs have indicated that supporting children's social and emotional development as one of their highest priorities. A significant investment to support this goal has been made through ongoing training in positive behavior supports, Pyramid Model, and Conscious Discipline. The 13 percentage point drop in DIAL behavior observations can be attributed in part to this focus.

All domains will continue to receive support as the State Implementation Team will continue to provide guidance so programs can fully implement their chosen curriculum with fidelity.

The State Team expects to see continued growth in DIAL scores this spring. More experience in implementation means programs have more time to fully implement their chosen curriculum, understand and use the MELS, receive needed and useful training, and develop their program-wide data driven decision making processes.

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.

The State has several measures in place to determine the quality of Preschool programs that includes an integrated process of on site and virtual monitoring to ensure programs are adhering the Montana Preschool Program Standards. The monitoring process is designed to facilitate communication and information exchange that assist programs with improving program quality, improving program linkages with state standards, incorporating best practices, and determining the quality of the PDG programs.

Subgrantees collaborate with the State Implementation Team through monthly on site visits. These visits enable staff to monitor grant activities, provide ongoing professional development, and support the facilitation of program leadership team meetings, ensuring grant requirements and program improvement goals are developed. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agenda's, updated Program Specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents. These documents are archived in a shared drive.

Oversight of this process is managed by a state monitoring team, who conduct desk audits of the collected documentation. Additionally state implementation team members regularly debrief with grant managers to provide updates and monitor progress.

As the lead agency for this grant, the OPI holds primary responsibility for the oversight of grant implementation activities. In order to accomplish this, the OPI has the following processes set up.

1. Advise all sub-recipients of grant requirements including federal regulations, contract agreements, and state requirements.
2. Conduct monthly site visits to monitor program involvement and progress, provide technical assistance and support, and establish plans for improvement using the continuous improvement cycle. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agenda's, updated Program Specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents.
3. Conduct a desk audit of all sub grantee programs. Data to be reviewed during desk audit includes APR survey, monthly summary documentation, and budget information.
4. Perform an onsite monitoring visit for any subgrantee that shows deficiencies as indicated by monthly visits and the results of the desk audit.
5. Monitor the activities of all subrecipients 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. Monitoring also ensures performance goals are achieved. This monitoring plan is aligned with all OPI standard operating procedures for programmatic and fiscal monitoring.

Areas identified for corrective action through the desk audit or onsite monitoring are addressed with the program leadership through a corrective action plan. The corrective action plan clearly identifies the item(s) that must be resolved, the demonstrable goals, staff responsible, and timelines. Areas for improvement may be incorporated into the program-wide continuous improvement cycle.

The roadmap for all School District and Head Start Programs in the state has all program staff participate in an electronic Self-Assessment. The results are then used to guide Program Leadership Teams (PLT's) in implementing the Montana Preschool Program Standards, which meets or exceeds the grant's definition of High-Quality Preschool Program with the exception of the requirement for a full-day program. However, programs are aware that, as a grant participant, they are required to provide a school day that is equivalent to a full day at the public elementary school in the State and operate no fewer than five hours a day.

The Self-Assessment tool outlines the important components of the Montana Preschool Program Standards as well as sub-components. The eight essential components include (1) Leadership and Administration (2) Early Learning Content Standards (3) Curriculum (4) Assessment (5) Instruction (6) Physical Learning Environments

(7) Child Guidance (8) Family and Community Engagement. The State Implementation Team members, who are on-site five to eight days each month, use the information from the Self-Assessment tool combined with student outcome measures, measures of environmental quality, and measures of the quality of adult-child Interactions to guide decision making through an ongoing continuous improvement action planning process.

Each year of the grant, the state collects information from each program. This collection includes each programs' academic year (start dates and end dates), daily hours of operation, class sizes, staff demographics and level of education, inclusion strategies, practices and accommodations, and information on coordination of child and family services. In addition, all children are enrolled in the state longitudinal data system, Achievement in Montana.

During their monthly visits with programs, State Team members gather information around program use of data as a part of a continuous improvement cycle, program provision of professional development, student recruitment barriers, comprehensive services, health and safety standards, and transportation for students to and from programs. The state uses this data to determine next steps for state support, target professional development, and to ensure grant expectations are being met. The state will also use this information to inform future state policy.

Each Subgrantee is required to employ a Family Engagement Coordinator or an identified person within their system to provide support for families and link them to community resources. Most of the High Needs Communities within this grant have put together local coalitions that work collaboratively with the PDG programs to provide community-level support and linkages to other early learning programs and resources. These coalitions are made of mental health professionals, school administrators, teachers, public health, local business partners, law enforcement, parents, and family engagement coordinators. Having a wide group of stakeholders ensures that communities are building a network of resources for families and children and raises awareness for leaders on the importance of supporting comprehensive care and education of young children in their communities.

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.

To improve the quality of State Preschool Programs, Montana has allocated around 30 percent of PDG funding for infrastructure supports and utilized about 70 percent of the PDG funding for investment in the structural elements of quality. Each year, the state has added additional Subgrantees and additional classrooms. In year one, 12 Subgrantees implemented High-Quality standards in 27 classrooms that increased to 18 Subgrantees implementing them in 57 classrooms in year two. During the third year, 22 Subgrantees implemented all essential High-Quality standards in 76 classrooms. Each community has encountered various obstacles as they began implementing all of the High-Quality indicators. However, they were able to increase the number of classrooms by identifying those obstacles and taking steps to address them as part of the action planning procedure as part of an ongoing continuous improvement process, of working in collaboration with their assigned State Implementation Team members.

The state is engaged in many strategies to build statewide infrastructure to improve quality. There are new requirements for preschool teachers in Montana, so the State has provided financial assistance to 190 teachers to take college courses toward a P-3 endorsement, which will increase the number of qualified teachers across the state. State personnel are employed and dedicated to conducting infrastructure building activities. These activities include monitoring and evaluating Subgrantee activities, incorporation of Head Start Programs into the state's longitudinal data system, implementation of grant requirements including the coordination of national and statewide stakeholders, communication with the project officer and technical assistance providers, planning of meetings for statewide stakeholders, and planning of meetings and trainings for Subgrantees, as well as time for interagency collaboration.

Although all 22 Subgrantees have classrooms implementing all of the High-Quality standards, there have been some barriers for programs wanting to implement all the High-Quality elements across their entire program. The first barrier is that programs do not have enough classroom space for all children to attend full day without drastically decreasing the total number of children enrolled. Many of our programs have traditionally provided a morning and an afternoon class in one classroom, allowing them to provide services for twice as many children. Some classrooms have not converted to full day, because the leadership team has not been able to find enough classroom space to accommodate two separate classrooms. In addition, they have expressed concern that fewer children will receive services if they eliminate the afternoon class. The second challenge is finding teachers that meet the High-Quality standards with a bachelor's degree. All programs have been able to find at least one qualified teacher, but those programs in rural high-poverty areas have had difficulty recruiting and maintaining qualified teachers. All programs are working toward problem solving these barriers. They are using the ongoing continuous improvement process with the goal of providing a slot for all eligible 4 year-old children in their communities so they have access to High-Quality educational services.

Participating classroom staff and leadership teams attend the annual Summer Institute Conference as well as other grant sponsored trainings to ensure a strong knowledge base about the elements of quality as outlined in

the Montana Preschool Program Standards. Programs have also been able to purchase curriculum and classroom materials to ensure High-Quality instruction is taking place.

One of this year's biggest successes took a great deal of coordination and collaboration with our internal partners for data collection. Subgrantee programs are now able to enter all child demographics, including those from Head Start Programs, through the statewide longitudinal data system this year. This success will be sustained, and it will allow for smooth transition when public preschool becomes available for all Montana children.

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.

All Montana Preschool Development Grant programs are expected to implement all of the structural elements of a High-Quality Preschool Program as prescribed by the grant and Montana's Preschool Program Standards. The following information describes how those High-Quality elements are pursued and monitored for success.

High Staff Qualifications

All MPDG High-Quality classrooms include one teacher with a bachelor's degree in EC or related field. Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is one of the biggest obstacles to providing High-Quality opportunities, especially in Montana's more remote communities. Programs have had some success in recruiting qualified teachers. However, with Montana's and Head Start's new teacher requirements, the demand for qualified EC teachers will only increase. These new requirements, lack of higher education opportunities, and the geographic remoteness makes finding qualified teachers a challenge for many High-Needs communities.

To help address this challenge, the MPDG has partnered with Montana's Early Childhood Project to offer financial assistance to educators in the grant's high needs communities to pursue EC degrees and endorsements. The financial assistance is paid to the educational institution and covers tuition and up to \$400 in course books. So far, 190 Montana EC professionals have received support.

The demand for this assistance has been high and Montana has used a portion of the supplemental grant monies to extend financial assistance.

High-Quality Professional Development

High-quality professional development is critical to building and maintaining a quality EC workforce in Montana. Professional development is delivered to all program staff through a variety of means.

Program Leadership Teams receive training to assist, guide, and inform them in the best ways to develop their programs. They attend two days of training in the spring of each year to receive information about grant requirements, leadership, continuous improvement, and to receive support and guidance as they plan their next year budgets. All instructional program staff and Program Leadership Team members attend a four-day Summer Institute Conference each summer of the grant during which participants receive information about grant requirements, as well as attend sessions to develop and expand shared knowledge regarding grant activities and best practices as outlined in the Montana Preschool Program Standards. Programs also receive five to eight days of on-site support each month from their assigned State Implementation Team Members. The number of support days provided is dependent upon how many PDG classrooms they have. The State Implementation Team Member assigned to their program supports the development and refinement of a PLT and continuous improvement processes, and provided professional learning opportunities for the development of a family and community engagement plan, a social emotional framework, and implementation of health and safety standards. Instructional Consultants provide on-going, job-embedded professional development for teachers in the classroom that included modeling of instruction, support with assessment data, and teacher goal setting and self-reflection. Staff receive professional development around inclusion of children with disabilities, ensuring access and full participation in all opportunities that are developmentally appropriate. They are also provided have culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula delivered in learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards. Teachers gained knowledge about strategies for providing individualized accommodations and supports so all children can access and participate fully in learning activities

Child-to-Instructional Staff Ratio

High-Quality classrooms in MPDG programs must maintain ratios of 10 children for every one adult. This requirement is agreed to by participating programs and ensured through site visits by State Team members.

Class Size and Teacher Qualifications

MPDG programs agree to limit class size to 20 children and have at least one teacher with high staff qualifications in each High-Quality classroom. Classroom size is monitored through enrollments in the state's data system, budget reports, and on site visits, while annual workforce reporting and on site visits ensure adherence to staff qualifications.

Full-Day Program

MPDG High-Quality classrooms are required to operate five and half hours daily for a total of 900 hours per academic year. Several programs used MPDG funds to extend their day and/or their academic year to meet this requirement. The State Implementation Team monitors programs to ensure understanding and compliance with this essential structural element.

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Montana continues to focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities in MPDG programs. Subgrantees are required to offer services and supports that include all children. The needs of all children are expected to be met through appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment with adoption of appropriate accommodations or modifications and individualized supports. The state supports these efforts by providing guidance, professional development, and material support as needed.

Currently, 4.6 percent of children served in Montana's public schools are children with disabilities. In the 2017-2018, 7 percent of children served by the MPDG are children with disabilities. This number is above the national level of 6.4 percent. The state will continue to work toward maintain this goal by increasing program awareness and providing supports to meet this requirement.

Responsive Instruction and Evidence Based Curricula and Learning Environments

The Montana Preschool Program Standards mandate preschool programs adopt an evidence-based curriculum. MPDG programs have all adopted either *Creative Curriculum* or *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*. MPDG programs receive ongoing professional development and support in implementing these developmentally appropriate evidence-based curricula with culturally and linguistically-responsive instruction in learning environments that aligned to the Montana Preschool Program Standards.

Programs receive feedback on their implementation success through student assessment, DIAL, CLASS, ECERS, and observation data collected by the State Team and by each PLT. Data collected through these processes inform action plans to continue to pursue authentic and thorough implementation.

Individualized Instruction and Support

MPDG programs receive ongoing professional development in providing individualized accommodations and support, so that program and instructional staff can best ensure that all children have access to and can participate fully in all learning activities. CLASS, ECERS, child assessment, and ongoing observation data collected by PLT's and State Team members was used to monitor implementation.

Instructional Staff Salaries

All MPDG instructional staff in High-Quality classrooms must earn a salary comparable to their local K-12 instructional staff. MPDG programs must provide documentation via annual budgets of staff salaries. These salaries are then compared to a statewide teacher salary database to ensure compliance with this requirement.

Program Evaluation to Ensure Continuous Improvement

MPDG Program Leadership Teams have received extensive instruction and support in implementing, monitoring, and maintaining action plans in ongoing continuous improvement cycles. Action plans are reviewed and updated monthly by the PLT's during meetings with their dedicated State Team members.

The data that guides these processes come from, but are not limited to, CLASS, ECERS and DIAL scores, State Team and PLT observation feedback, and child assessment data. Programs can supplement these data with other sources based on their unique needs. The degree of facilitation provided by the State Team members varies by program based on their experience and acquaintance with the continuous improvement cycle with the goal of all programs taking full ownership of the process by the end of the MPDG.

Accessible Comprehensive Services for Children and Families

All MPDG programs are required to hire an onsite Family Engagement Coordinator to develop and implement a Family and Community Engagement Plan that will make Comprehensive Services accessible to children and their families. Family Engagement Coordinators provide information and facilitate referral services, as well as coordinate direct services for families. The state supports this position through regular meetings with the State Team members. Local Best Beginning Coalitions work collaboratively with the program's Family Engagement Coordinator to explore community partnerships, identify existing services and service gaps, and plan to remediate those gaps as needed.

Evidence-Based Health and Safety Standards

Program Leadership Teams are responsible for implementing and monitoring health and safety standards. State Team members provide monthly on site support and feedback on the progress of these efforts. In addition, ECERS scores are used to analyze implementation and provide feedback.

Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

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

In the initial PDG grant application, Montana projected that 1,138 Eligible Children would be served in high-quality preschool slots in year one, and 1,613 Eligible Children in years two and three. Subgrantees in the identified High Needs Communities were encouraged to provide slots in High-Quality classrooms for the eligible four-year-old children in their community. Each community worked with the local Early Childhood coalitions to conduct surveys to try to identify Eligible Children in their communities that were not already enrolled. During the 2015-2016 school year, Subgrantees were able to provide slots for 462 of the projected 1138 (41 percent) Eligible Children and that number was increased to 763 of 1613 (47%) eligible four year old children for the second school year, and during the 2017-2018 school year that number has increased to 1,000 (62 percent) of the projected 1,613 from the original grant application.

There are a few factors that contributed to the original grant targets not being met. First, initial projections included 448 slots that would have been created by a state wide preschool bill. However, no funding was allocated until the 2017-2018 academic year. 302 children are served by the state-funded preschool program this year.

Secondly, when the grant writers were identifying their projections, they labored under the understanding that any classroom receiving grant support could have their Eligible Children included and not just those implementing all High-Quality indicators. The MPDG allowed for an infrastructure building year because many programs needed time and money to establish a High-Quality classroom. This year, the MPDG has 65 eligible four-year-olds who are in classrooms that do not meet all the High-Quality indicators. These 65 children combined with the 302 in the state-funded preschool slots bring Montana's served eligible four-year-olds up to 1,367, or 85 percent, of the projected number of children served.

Finally, grant writers were projecting numbers for classrooms envisioned to be filled with all eligible four-year-old children. When programs learned that Montana received the grant and details were finalized, it was determined that several programs found value or logistically needed to include 3-year-old and/or 5-year-old children or four-year-old children who were not income eligible in their classrooms. Based on this feedback, programs were given the option to use partial grant funding to pay for children who were eligible and needed to use other funding sources to pay for slots filled with children who were not eligible and 32 of 57 classrooms

in 2015-2016 choose this option. There were 169 three-year-olds, 25 five-year-olds, and 52 income ineligible four-year olds accounting for an additional 246 children served by the grant. Despite not meeting these projected numbers, the State is pleased with the increase in the number of students served in year three.

The state set a target of \$3,500 per slot. Since Montana previously did not have state-funded preschool projections, the target amount of \$3,500 per slot was based on our work with Early Reading First and the Montana Striving Readers Project, for which the average cost was near \$4,000 per child. In addition, a survey by the Best Beginnings Advisory Council was also conducted with principals and superintendents across the State that said at least \$3,000 would be needed per child to fund High-Quality Preschool Programs. The State Implementation Team also gathered data from Subgrantees, that includes teacher qualifications and compensation, full day, class size/ratio, evidence-based professional development, and comprehensive services to help inform the calculation of the target cost per slot written into the grant. Other information that informed cost projection included research done by the Governor's office for his preschool proposal and average costs for Early Head Start and Head Start Programs per slot.

The cost per child fell from an average of \$14,069 in 2015-2016 to an average of \$5,065 in 2016-2017. In year one the cost per child ranged from about \$2,500 to \$64,000 and was significantly higher in school district programs who did not have an existing preschool program in place and as such had larger capital expenditures in their startup year to establish developmentally appropriate classrooms and playground equipment. In year 2, the cost per child ranged from \$1,881 to \$14,356 with an average cost of \$5,065. In year three, cost per child ranges from \$1,022 to \$9,608 with the cost per child at \$4,514. This average continues to decrease each year as programs have now purchased the majority of classroom supplies and materials in the first two years of implementation. Head Start Programs were able to use PDG funding to supplement the cost of implementation to cover the higher teacher salary, longer school day, and longer school year that limited their cost per child for PDG funding. School districts had a higher cost per child as they do not have as many resources available to them, so MPDG provides the majority of funding for each classroom. An additional factor needing consideration is the pay outlined in the matrix for school districts varies. Districts hiring veteran teachers trend toward the higher end of the salary matrix and incurred a greater cost per child.

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.

The State Implementation Team continues to focus on building strong collaborative partnerships with Subgrantees as they develop their high-quality preschool programs. The state ensures effective implementation through budget review through the state's electronic grants system, annual desk audits, monitoring visits as needed, and monthly on-site visits from State Implementation Team members. The state supports effective implementation through budget guidance, professional development, state meetings and trainings, and through interagency and cross-sector partnerships with early childhood stakeholders across the state.

Participating MPDG programs are required to submit an annual itemized budget through the Montana's online E-Grants system to receive funding. Once submitted, budgets are reviewed for grant requirement alignment before they are approved. The State Team offers support to programs in modifying noncomplying budgets when needed. Subgrantees are required to minimize local administrative costs in their annual budget. In addition, the State Team conducts annual desk audits of each program and follow up with site monitoring visits on an as-needed basis.

The state's monitoring process is designed to facilitate communication and information exchange that will assist programs with improving program quality, improving program linkages with state standards, incorporating best practices, and determining the quality of the PDG programs. Subgrantees agree to collaborate with the State Implementation Team through monthly on site visits. These visits enable staff to monitor grant activities, provide ongoing professional development, and support program leadership team meetings thus ensuring grant requirements and program improvement goals are developed. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agendas, updated program-specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents.

The MPDG also supports effective High-Quality implementation through ongoing professional development. This remains a key activity that strengthens partnerships with Subgrantees. These efforts include spring PLT Meetings, the Summer Institute for PLT's and all instructional staff, and on site support from the State Implementation Team as they supported the continuous improvement processes and the development of PLT roles and procedures.

To assist the state, an external evaluator conducts an annual evaluation of the MPDG. This evaluation provides an in-depth analysis of the progress each year and provides an annual report to the State Leadership Team. The state assesses this information to inform next steps and actions for the project as well as identify specific program needs. Analysis from that report includes the following findings:

- Preschool educators attended the Summer Institute, received relevant content from expert presenters, and appreciated opportunities to network with other preschool educators. Responses to the spring 2017 survey by Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 preschool program staff members indicated that two-thirds of staff members attended the Summer Institute Conference. All participants viewed the conference favorably. All participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the institute provided them with an overview of the requirements, offered useful information, and was of High-Quality. Interview data were similarly positive, with comments such as "the Summer Institute Conference is always phenomenal. I glean something different each time." Participants were positive about the content and the presenters but were most thankful for the opportunity to spend time with other educators, both from their program and from across the state.
- PLT members found participating in required meetings met their needs, but they desired more time to collaborate. All program leadership team attendants affirmed that the information provided at the

meeting met their needs at least “somewhat” in understanding grant goals and requirements. PLT members liked having the dedicated time to share with their program leadership team members and other colleagues, but they expressed a need for more time together.

- OPI and DPHHS regional specialists and instructional consultants provided training and coaching to assist program leadership and instructional staff implement the standards onsite. The State Implementation Team indicated they worked monthly with program leadership teams, using the continuous improvement cycle to set goals, creating agendas and facilitating meetings, and providing professional development and general support. Together they reported devoting time to helping leadership understand topics such as analyzing data, staff wellness and support, curriculum, multitiered systems of support, instruction, child development, and collaborating to better support children including those with special needs. All instructional consultants either engaged in the teacher reflection cycle or supported program coaches in doing so. They also supported teaching teams by providing training, professional development, and modeling. Interview and survey comments indicated they provided the most support in the areas of instruction and curriculum. They also addressed assessment, physical and learning environments, and the MELS.
- Preschool staff members appreciated that regional specialists and instructional consultant took the time to learn about their programs and communities and were responsive to their needs. PLT members agreed that state implementation team members' support showed an understanding of their program's context, helped them implement the preschool program standards and MELS, and was of High-Quality. Preschool staff members also praised the regional specialists for taking the time to learn about their communities or for being constantly available or responsive to the needs of their program. Instructional consultants were also praised for being responsive to the needs of their programs and for their knowledge, experience, and ability to provide needed resources.
- When preschool staff members did offer criticism, it was most often about regional specialist support. Some preschool staff members wanted more explicit advice, more support in a particular area, or more responsibility to make their own decisions. Some thought the regional specialists were not as familiar with their community as they should be or that they were provided mixed messages. Few educators complained about the support from instructional consultants, and any negative feedback typically related to a consultant's lack of experience in EC education.
- The State Leadership Team meets quarterly with the Governor's BBAC to update state-wide stakeholders of grant activities and progress. The State Leadership Team meets monthly to monitor project level needs and progress. These conversations include ways for ensuring the delivery of High-Quality Preschool Programs to Eligible Children who may be in need of additional supports such as children with disabilities or developmental delays, English learners, children who reside in rural or tribal areas, migrant children, homeless children, children in the welfare system, children from military families, and other children as identified by stakeholders. Information gathered by experts in these areas is communicated to the State Implementation Team to provide better support and relay the information to PLT's. Identified experts in needed areas are invited to provide information at State Implementation Team Meetings and as presenters at Summer Institute Conference.
- The State Implementation Team meets for two days each month to ensure common knowledge around grant expectations and discuss roles and responsibilities of the OPI and DPHHS team members. Refining the processes for on site support for programs toward the coordination and delivery of plans related to assessments, data sharing, instructional tools, and family engagement are also priorities for these meetings. EC stakeholder work also ensures the coordination of cross-sector and comprehensive services supported by Title I of ESEA, IDEA Parts B and C, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Head Start Act, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.
- The community needs surveys conducted by the local coalitions were completed by Subgrantees, early learning providers, parents and community stakeholders. The state is gathering information around the current collaboration in addition to identifying areas in need of improvement. In addition, the survey is designed to gather information about the availability of High-Quality preschool and barriers to access that can be addressed to increase numbers of youth receiving preschool.

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

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

The State continues to make progress with High-Quality Preschool Programs supported through PDG funding with the alignment and collaboration with the local systems that serve children from birth through third grade to improve transitions for children across the continuum. One key activity is to improve transitions for children across this continuum through partnerships with school district and Head Start programs. Programs included funding in their budget for inclusion of partnering district Principals and Kindergarten teachers in the annual Summer Institute Conference and other professional learning opportunities offered in their region to support the development of High-Quality Preschool Programs. In addition, the MPDG is supporting the state's inaugural year of the STARS Preschool Program and the Striving Readers grant.

Montana is currently piloting various strategies and plans for transition from Pre-K to kindergarten through the development of individual program Family Engagement plans. These plans are developed around local community resources and needs, and each community uses their family engagement specialist to implement them. These plans include collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers, expansion of access to full-day kindergarten, and increasing the percentage of children who are proficient in reading and math at grade level by the end of third grade. Leadership teams are using information collected from DIAL, formative assessment measures, CLASS, and ECERS to inform future decision making around the development of plans for ensuring alignment within a birth through third grade continuum. The State Implementation Team member assigned to each program is working in collaboration with program leadership and family engagement coordinator in each community to continually fine tune the family engagement and transitions plans throughout the grant.

The State is gathering information and exemplar resources that will be made available to all Montana early childhood stakeholders. The State has also launched the longitudinal data system for preschool aged children that includes Head Start programs, allowing for closer tracking of student demographics and history of enrollment in programs.

The 2017-2018 academic year marks the first year of Montana's STARS Preschool Program. This program, administered by DPHHS, funds preschool spots in community-based, Head Start, and public schools, with the majority of spots being in the latter.

Montana also received a U.S. Department of Education Striving Readers Grant, administered by the OPI. This grant requires a continuum from birth through the twelfth grade and a documented plan to address this vertical alignment. This grant has several overlapping communities with the MPDG. The MPDG will work collaboratively with Striving Readers programs to support their work and draw early childhood program and public school efforts together.

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*.

In Montana's grant proposal the total match for four years was \$16,788,000.

Matching funds-The overall State match: \$16,788,000

Year 1: \$4,197,000

Year 2: \$4,197,000

Year 3: \$4,197,000

Year 4: \$4,197,000 In our proposal under Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds, we identified four areas of support for matching funds. During the 2015 legislative session, a bill was brought forward for voluntary preschool, called Early Edge Montana. It would have been open to all 4-year-olds. The plan called for \$37 million over the next biennium. The match for the grant was \$1,497,000 per year, which would have provided block grants for 16 high need communities identified in this grant.

A budget amendment identifying three match categories that include AIM longitudinal data match of \$850,503 each year, STARS match of \$1,200,000 each year, and a Growth and Enhancement of Montana's Students (GEMS) match of \$230,000 each year for the first two years of the grant. The GEMS category was added to offset the legislative decision in the first two years. This cost is part of the development of the longitudinal data system. The Montana legislature allocated money in 2017 for \$6,000,000 for the biennium, securing state preschool slots for the final two years of the MPDG.

The amended match is \$16,788,000.

Matching funds-The overall State match: \$16,788,000.

Year 1: \$2,280,503

Year 2: \$2,280,503

Year 3: \$6,113,497

Year 4: \$6,113,497

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.

The State has followed its plan for the creation of a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade for a defined group of Eligible Children and their families within each High-Need

Community served by each Subgrantee.

All participating Programs have hired a full-time Family Engagement Coordinator responsible for integrating comprehensive high-quality supports and services to help create smooth transitions for children and families. Ensuring continuous and consistent high-quality early learning opportunities critical to children's success through transitions from one system to another and to coordinate services including home visiting, high-quality infant and toddler care, preschool programs, before-and-after-care services, and other family supports have been a priority. STARS is Montana's Quality Rating System. In support of the State Implementation Team encouraging and supporting leadership teams to take advantage of the STARS opportunity, many EC stakeholders have and continue to work on aligning requirements for childcare licensing, Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System and Head Starts. The alignment process is a major success and will continue to improve over the next couple of years. The alignment work and the reworking of rules and regulations will support consistent high-quality early learning opportunities starting at birth. In addition to the alignment work, the state is making a more robust training and tracking system for early educator's workforce development which will raise the level of professional development and quality of early care providers and teachers.

Close collaboration between subgrantees and local Best Beginnings Coalitions has been in place in the majority of the High Needs Communities. The local coalitions are coordinating with subgrantees to provide a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade, such as high-quality infant and toddler care, home visitation, attendance in state-funded Full-Day kindergarten, and before- and after-care services, adult education, housing, health, and mental health services.

Within the MPDG period, two major workgroups have been developed through the Best Beginning Advisory Council to support and guide decision making. The creation of infant and toddler care work group as well as a Family Engagement workgroups have combined resources and workforce energy to support and sustain collaboration efforts across agencies. Local Coalitions across the state provide oversight to Home Visiting Grant recipients as well as opportunities for local comprehensive services for children and families. Having coalitions that are active in a wide range of communities is key to bringing the work into one aligned system.

Expansion of the current Achievement in Montana (AIM) Statewide Longitudinal Data System to link preschool and elementary and secondary school data is now in place for all PDG subgrantees and includes 12 Head Start Programs that have not been a part of the longitudinal data system in the past. The expansion of this system bridges early childhood and K-12 systems together in an innovative way and we foresee this continuing to be a partnership that is beneficial to both parties moving forward.

Expansion of the alignment of child learning standards and expectations through the development of a crosswalk document of the MELS and the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for K-3 for use by early learning providers as they make informed instructional decisions that support one another. The valuable resources developed with PDG funds creates sustainability that outlasts the grant. These resources are shared will all providers.

Subgrantees have developed Family and Community Engagement Plans that will ensure access to resources, services, and outline activities that provide children and families with successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

Family engagement coordinators worked to build relationships and collaboration with parents. Coordinators worked to increase the involvement of parents in the program in a variety of ways to learn about and ultimately support them and their children. Educators encouraged parents to volunteer in classrooms and to participate in meetings. Coordinators conducted home visits or engaged in intake processes to gain a better understanding of a family's context, issues they faced, and goals for the child participating in the program. Other ways to involve parents included sending bags of materials and books home to parents sponsoring family night activities (including powwows), and offering parent trainings (e.g., Love and Logic).

Last year I didn't do family intakes and this year we did. I found that allowed a huge level of trust from the get go. Last year it took almost a full year to get to the point where families trust you. That is an important piece. Family intake is important and has driven enrollment of preschool families. It is a feeder for some of the other things we are doing. They are learning. We give families information and talk about why reading is important at family nights as well and give takeaways to children, and are trying to get parents into the classroom to volunteer,

as well as sharing community resources. (Preschool staff member)

Support from State Implementation Team members assisted coordinators and preschool educators to plan for engagement and them to better understand their programs' children, families, and communities. Educators were appreciative of support in developing family and community engagement plans and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and resiliency training they attended.

At the 2015 Summer Institute, they showed the movie Paper Tigers, about the ACE study. This year they followed up with a resilience movie. It gave me a reminder to be aware of what families could be going through and think about what behaviors could be due to. At one of my program leadership teams yesterday it was a big topic --how much staff valued that training. (State Implementation Team member)

Parents were extremely positive about both their own and their child's involvement in MPDG activities. Parents continued to report that their child's classroom was a safe learning environment with teachers who met their child's ongoing academic, social-emotional, and physical needs. Parents indicated their child learned academic and social skills, was better prepared for kindergarten, and had an overall enjoyable time in preschool.

[Teacher name] and [teacher name], as well as the other teachers, do such a wonderful job teaching them the skills they will need to be successful in kindergarten. The lesson plans they used were worded well and had my daughter excited about school. Her teachers were patient, and offered lots of encouragement, which gave her the confidence to succeed. (Parent)

Parents engaged with educators. Most (At least 90 percent) reported that their child's teacher communicated with them and involved them in their child's education in the classroom. At least 75 percent found these activities very helpful. Parents were slightly less likely to have been engaged in activities that supported their child's learning at home.

Family engagement coordinators engaged with their school district, local Best Beginnings Coalition, and community-based organizations. Working with school districts and kindergarten teachers helped ensure children and families were introduced to their new schools, preschool teachers better understood the activities that kindergarten students engage in, and kindergarten teachers learned about the skills and needs of their incoming students. Preschool educators were trying to align activities between their program and elementary schools to make the transition for parents more consistent. At least 92 percent reported that they were involved in kindergarten transition activities; At least 83 percent of parents found these activities very helpful.

Family engagement coordinators also networked with community organizations. They did so to establish screening and referral mechanisms, identify community resources, and find ways for community organizations to support their programs for example through field trips and volunteers. At least 93 percent surveyed preschool staff members "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that family engagement coordinators worked to increase linkages with community-based organizations that supported families with young children and helped parents access them. Parents were less likely to have been engaged in activities that supported their family's health and well-being and community building (at least 66 percent), and to find them very helpful (at least 54 percent).

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.

All of the State's federal grant award has been utilized to create new State Preschool Program slots.



Section B: Budget Information

Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

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

Montana does not anticipate large discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Montana submitted a carryover request of \$7,381,486 of unobligated funds from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017. The carryover for the OPI will be used to complete grant activities for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year, as outlined in the grant narrative, rather than grant calendar year. We do not expect to have any unexpended funds at the end of the current budget period because we plan to spend all of year two funding by September 30, 2018.

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).

Montana does not anticipate any substantive changes to the State's approved budget in the upcoming fiscal year.

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

All of the State's slots are new slots for preschool as there has not been state funding for preschool in Montana until this year. The State Team is working with PLT to think creatively to develop ways to sustain the progress they have made to continue to be able to provide access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in their communities. Communities are working collaboratively and many School District and Head Start programs are pooling resources 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. School districts are exploring ways to blend funding sources that include Title I, special education, Impact Aid, and General Funds.

Programs have developed program-wide process for using data to inform ongoing improvement of outcomes for children. It is the goal of the state to continue to work with programs to ensure these new processes become part of the everyday way in which they operate so they continue beyond the grant. The state has also focused efforts on workforce development through job-embedded learning opportunities, meetings, trainings, and financial assistant efforts discussed earlier in this report to sustain high quality standard implementation in early childhood settings across the state.

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.

At this time we are not aware of any discrepancies between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. A large portion of the \$7,850,500 of unobligated funds from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016, requested for carryover is money that programs had not yet spent. Final

expenditure reports will be due on September 10, 2018.