



Preschool Development Grants

# Development Grants

GRANTEE ABSTRACT

## Alabama

### Overview

Alabama's Preschool Development Grant application presents a plan to further develop and enhance High-Quality voluntary First Class Pre-K to all children in Alabama. Alabama's ambitious and proven plan for expanding access to High-Quality Preschool Programs has been incrementally developed, implemented and refined since 2000. The Office of School Readiness (a division of the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs) is responsible for identifying potential sites in the state for new preschool programs, for authorizing the establishment of new High-Quality Preschool Programs, and for supporting and monitoring pre-k programs throughout the state. These programs are known as First Class Pre-K and have established guidelines, operating procedures, and quality standards that are regularly monitored to promote student success.

Participation in Alabama's First Class Pre-K program is voluntary. Services and programs are delivered in a variety of settings, with diverse partner agencies, while maintaining consistent, high quality standards. Alabama's First Class Pre-K program is nationally recognized for quality by the National Institute for Early Learning Research (NIEER). For the past eight years (2006-2014) Alabama First Class Pre-K has met all of the National Institute for Early Learning Research (NIEER) benchmarks for quality standards, and in 2014

#### Lead Agency

Alabama Department of Children's Affairs

#### Year 1 Federal Award Amount

\$ 17,500,000

#### Plan Period

January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2018

**Preschool Development Grants** will support states to build, develop, and expand voluntary, high-quality preschool programs for children from low- and moderate-income families.

There are two types of grants.

**Development Grants** are for states that currently serve less than 10 percent of four-year-olds and have not received a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant.

**Expansion Grants** are for states that currently serve 10 percent or more of four-year-olds or have received an RTT-ELC grant.

Alabama was one of only four states in the country to receive this distinction.

Alabama Governor Robert Bentley has provided unparalleled support for High-Quality Pre-K, and it is his foremost education priority. The addition of funds from the Preschool Development Grant will enable the Office of School Readiness to significantly increase access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the communities of Alabama with the greatest need through an achievable and proven plan. Alabama's goal of access to High-Quality preschool for all four-year-old children has always been and remains an ambitious one—access and highest quality for all.

## DEVELOPMENT GRANTEE: ALABAMA

A needs assessment conducted to identify the High-Need Communities in Alabama determined the 23 counties with the highest level of need when ranked with these criteria: percentage of Eligible Children, percentage of four-year-olds being served in pre-k, graduation rate, presence of failing school(s), juvenile violence rate, percentage of dual language learners, percentage of single parent families, and retention rates for both first grade and ninth grade. The 23 counties with the highest levels of need were divided into two groups, with higher priority being given to those with k-12 schools identified as “failing” by the Alabama State Department of Education.

The High-Need Communities are a mixture of rural and urban areas and are distributed geographically throughout the state, Alabama seeks to provide all children the benefits of early learning experiences that have been proven to profoundly influence a child’s success in school and throughout life. A study on the benefits and impact of Alabama First Class Pre-K, begun in November 2013, found: Alabama First Class Pre-K students consistently over time and across grades score higher in reading and math than students who did not participate in First Class Pre-K; miss fewer days of school than students who did not participate in First Class PreK; are less likely to need special education services than students who did not participate in First Class Pre-K; and are less likely to repeat a grade than students who did not participate in First Class Pre-K. Additionally, the benefits of First Class Pre-K were even more pronounced for children from low-income families.

Reports from the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) indicated that First Class Pre-K participation closed the achievement gap for lower income students by an average of twenty-five percent (25%) by grade three. According to the 2013 NIEER Yearbook, Alabama is the only state to

demonstrate significant growth in access to state-funded pre-k programs while protecting high quality for each First Class Pre-K classroom. Alabama is in its third year of implementing its ambitious strategy to fully fund High-Quality Pre-K for the state’s four-year-old population. Funds from the Preschool Development Grant will accelerate the state’s ability to accomplish its ambitious goal. The Preschool Development Grant will build on Alabama’s progress to date through an ambitious and achievable plan by further developing and enhancing infrastructure and providing greater access to High-Quality Pre-K Programs to Eligible Children in High-Need Communities.

With the support of the Preschool Development Grant, Alabama’s ambitious and achievable goal is to add 400 High-Quality Pre-K classrooms serving 7,200 additional students over the course of the grant, extending access in High-Need Communities. This will expand the availability of High-Quality Pre-K education in Alabama from 9% of eligible children to 26% by 2018.

### High-Need Communities to be Served under Alabama’s Plan

<b>Limestone</b>	<b>Tallapoosa</b>
<b>Madison</b>	<b>Autauga</b>
<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Elmore</b>
<b>Walker</b>	<b>Lee</b>
<b>Blount</b>	<b>Dallas</b>
<b>Etowah</b>	<b>Montgomery</b>
<b>Calhoun</b>	<b>Mobile</b>
<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Escambia</b>
<b>Tuscaloosa</b>	<b>Coffee</b>
<b>Shelby</b>	<b>Henry</b>
<b>Talladega</b>	<b>Houston</b>
<b>Chilton</b>	