

Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in South Carolina

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Section A. Executive Summary

In response to the federal *Preschool Development Grants – Expansion Grant Competition*, the state of South Carolina proposes an **ambitious and achievable plan** for **expanding access to High-Quality Preschool Programs** to low-income children in up to **73 local school districts**.

Building upon the state’s 30-year commitment to publicly-funded prekindergarten – including recent expansions which have seen state’s **investment more than double since FY12** – South Carolina proposes to:

- Create at least **1,700 High-Quality Preschool expansion slots** for low-income four-year-olds in 12 expansion districts underserved by the state’s voluntary, mixed-delivery 4K expansion. Subgrantees in these communities would include both school districts and private preschool providers meeting the definition of High-Quality.
- **Enhance the quality of an estimated 1,864 existing state slots**. Consistent with grant guidelines, South Carolina proposes the use of grant funds to: 1) *expand public school half-day programs to full-day* within the 12 expansion districts, and 2) provide supplemental funding to private providers in 73 eligible districts to allow them to *employ teachers with bachelors’ degrees in early childhood and compensate them at rates comparable to those offered by local districts*.

At least 95% of the state’s total award will be **subgranted directly to public and private preschool providers**, with the remaining **5% supporting infrastructure needs** including statewide professional development, data system upgrades, and required grant monitoring.

Because of South Carolina's robust existing structure, the state hopes to reach full enrollment targets no later than Year Two.

South Carolina's existing state preschool programs operate under guidelines nearly identical to the federal government's definition of High-Quality. All grant-funded students will attend in classrooms meeting this definition and will:

- Be **connected to comprehensive services** – including culturally and linguistically responsive outreach and communication, special education services, and family engagement supports.
- Be **assessed across essential and clearly articulated domains of school readiness** upon kindergarten entry.
- Engage in meaningful and appropriate **transition activities** as they advance to kindergarten.

South Carolina's application meets criteria for each of the *Preschool Development Grant's* three Competitive Priorities:

- Due to expanded FY15 appropriations, South Carolina is considered to have provided 20% in state matching funds.
- The state proposes to meaningfully integrate grant funded preschool within a broader birth to third grade service continuum.
- The state proposes the use of more than 50% of total grant funds for the creation of new expansion slots.