



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

January 13, 2017

Jeana Ross
Director of Federal Programs
Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
135 South Union Street, Suite 215
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

Dear Ms. Ross:

On August 29-31, 2016, a team from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) (the Department) conducted an onsite monitoring review of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Alabama's (ADECE) implementation of its approved Preschool Development Grant (PDG). This monitoring aims to continue the collaborative relationship that began at the grant award and development of the scope of work. It provides the Department with a deeper understanding of each State's overall performance; the successes, challenges, and strategies for the implementation of its plans for the PDG Development grant; and the fiscal management of the grant funds. It also helps us tailor technical assistance to each State's specific needs.

The monitoring review included discussions related to all projects in the approved scope of work, including grants management, high-quality preschool programs, early learning standards, comprehensive services, workforce development, and sustainability.

Enclosed is a summary report based upon this review. The report includes highlights of ADECE's implementation of PDG and a snapshot of Alabama's progress under each PDG key area. This report will be posted on the PDG website. The report includes "next steps" to ensure that the ADECE continues to implement their PDG consistent with its approved application, scope of work, and timelines identified in its project plans.

We want to thank you and your staff for your preparation and cooperation during the desk monitoring review, and for your efforts in providing high quality preschool opportunities through the Preschool Development Grant. We hope you will continue to communicate any needs or concerns to your ED project officer(s).

We look forward to continuing our work with you and supporting Alabama's technical assistance needs to ensure successful implementation of PDG. Thank you for your commitment to Alabama's youngest children.

Sincerely,

/s/

Libby Doggett
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office Early Learning
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

Enclosure



PDG Desk Monitoring Report

Monitoring Information	
State Lead Agency	Alabama State Education Department
State Participating Agency(s)	Alabama State Education Department
Grant Period	January 1, 2015-December 31, 2019
Current Year of Grant	January 1, 2016-December 31, 2016
PDG Monitoring Period	May 2016 – September 30, 2016
PDG Monitoring Activity (Desk or Onsite)	Onsite
Monitoring Review Date(s)	August 29-31, 2016
State Participants/Project Leads	ADECE PDG Officials, Jenna Ross, Director of Federal Programs Laura Baker, Tracye Strichik, Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA) and Partners
U.S. Department of Education Project Officer(s)	Tammy Proctor Rebecca Marek

Overview of PDG Monitoring

The Department of Education is committed to supporting States as they implement the expansion of high-quality preschool programs for eligible children through their PDG grant. Consistent with this commitment, the Department has designed a monitoring process to assess a State’s implementation of the program requirements and its approved Scope of Work for PDG and the State-level systems and processes needed to support implementation.

During the recent onsite monitoring, Alabama’s implementation of PDG was reviewed across several key areas: Capacity Building and Increasing Slots, Subrecipient Monitoring, Birth to Third Grade Continuum, Budget and Sustainability, and Fiscal Accountability which represent the core priorities for implementation as outlined in the PDG Monitoring Tool. In each area, the Department identified key elements that are required under PDG and are likely to increase the access to and quality of State

Preschool programs and lead to increased high quality opportunities for young children and their families.

Alabama was identified for a desk monitoring review based on the following factors:

- Alabama is a PDG Development State and the Department is conducting desk monitoring or onsite monitoring visits of all PDG grantees; and
- Alabama had not been monitored previously during the grant period.

The report contains the following sections:

- **Summary of Call.** This section describes, in brief, the topics covered, the lead agency and subrecipients visited, as well as personnel participation in any meetings or activities.
- **Highlights of the State's Implementation.** This section identifies key accomplishments in the State's implementation of PDG as identified during the site visit.
- **Status of Implementation of PDG.** This section indicates the State's implementation progress based on the monitoring and information collected.
- **Elements Requiring Next Steps.** This section identifies any elements for which the State is not on target for meeting its timelines outlined in the approved scope of work and includes next steps that the State must take to meet the grant outcomes, as identified during the monitoring.
- **Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation.** This section provides recommendations to support the State in continuing to meet the goals and timelines of its PDG grant, as identified during the monitoring.
- **Additional Comment.** As appropriate, this section includes any additional information related to the State's implementation of PDG not included elsewhere.

Summary of Visit

The PDG onsite monitoring review for Alabama (ADECE) was conducted on August 29-31, 2016. During the onsite monitoring review ED and ADECE officials discussed various aspects of PDG implementation including building capacity and increasing slots; subrecipient monitoring; fiscal and budget implementation; and birth to third grade continuum. ADECE provided documentation to ED officials before the scheduled onsite monitoring review. ED officials also visited several Pre-K programs in Alabama to discuss the PDG grants impact on grantee programs. ED official's visited Wetumpka Elementary School; Einstein's Playground, which is a faith, based Pre-K Program, Oliver Elementary School, Sumiton Middle School Head Start Pre-K Program and lastly, Sumiton Elementary School Pre-K. ED officials also reviewed the documents, used annual performance report (APR) information, and used various monitoring activities during the time of the grant (e.g. monthly calls) to provide information regarding implementation during the desk monitoring review. ED officials discussed the identified challenges and barriers to PDG implementation including cost allocation, areas of limited participation, technical assistance to grantees and outreach to parents.

Highlight of the State's PDG Implementation

- Alabama met its goal of having at least one pre-K classroom in each of its 67 counties. In addition, the Office of School Readiness (OSR) is housed within the ADECE, which allows the Early Childhood Office to benefit from and leverage professional development opportunities.

OSR funds over 600 Pre-K classrooms and supports the professional development of a high quality workforce through education, training, and on-site coaching and monitoring.

- ADECE formed partnerships with the State Department of Education (ALSDE) Divisions of Special Education and Federal Programs (Title I and Title III) to provide support to programs with meeting the needs of children with disabilities and English language learners. ADECE actively work with pre-k programs to ensure children with disabilities and English language learners receive appropriate services. Through a partnership with twelve other organizations, the Alabama “Help Me Grow” (HMG) campaign was formed to link families to community resources, provide effective care coordination and facilitate partnerships with the state and local communities to improve the accessibility and the quality of support services for children and families.
- ADECE has identified and developed several initiatives in the state to support services to children and families that ensure children are healthy and ready for success in school. The initiatives led by the state’s public/private organization, Alabama Partnership for Children, in partnerships with several Alabama state agencies has established three programs to coordinate Comprehensive Services to families and children: (1) Strengthening Families, (2) Help Me Grow, and (3) Safe and Secure Children. The Strengthening Families (SF) framework will be implemented in pre-k programs as a parent engagement model.

Status of Implementation of PDG

During the onsite monitoring, the Department used a monitoring and accountability rubric to help determine progress of the State’s implementation. The rubric includes three implementation status levels:

- **Level 1** – Developing: the State is in the process of developing this activity, or the activity is very new. The State may be facing challenges in implementation, roll-out, or communications with subrecipients and other stakeholders.
- **Level 2** – Implementing: the State has developed and implemented the activity, although the activity might still benefit from adjustments, training, or communications with subrecipients and other stakeholders.
- **Level 3** – Sustaining & Continuing Improvement: the activity is well-established in the State, and may be undergoing a process of evaluation or program improvement. Subrecipients, stakeholders and users have been trained and/or communications strategies have been established.

Element	Status
Capacity Building and Increasing Slots	
The State public awareness and recruitment activities are targeted towards eligible 4 year old children in high need communities and families 200 percent below poverty.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State’s expansion efforts are targeted towards increasing the access to high quality preschool programs for 4 year olds.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement

The State has a plan to ensure that existing State Preschool slots met the twelve standards of a High Quality Preschool Program under the PDG funding.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
Subrecipient Monitoring	
The State Lead Agency has a process to monitor grant and sub-recipients activities to ensure implementation of the goals and performance measures outlined in the approved PDG State Plan.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is on schedule with its monitoring of subrecipients to ensure that all of the high quality standards for Preschool are met within PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is providing access to comprehensive services to all children enrolled in the PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
Birth to Third Grade Continuum	
The State has aligned the PDG funded program within the Birth to Third Grade Continuum of early learning standards and activities that help prepare children for kindergarten thru third grade.	Implementing
The State is implementing a data collection system for tracking student outcomes from prekindergarten to kindergarten entry through third grade.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is implementing a transition protocol to ensure that children transitioning from early care and education environments to kindergarten to third grade settings receive the supports necessary for a smooth transition.	Implementing
Budget and Sustainability	
The State has policies and procedures to track the State and Subrecipient budget activities to ensure that funds are expanded according to State, Local and Federal procurement laws.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State has in place a system to track the “use of funds” under the PDG grant.	Implementing
The State has a plan to ensure that High Quality State Preschool Programs will remain of high quality after federal funds are no longer available.	Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
Fiscal Accountability	
The State has policies and procedures in place to ensure the grant funds are expended according to the federal laws outlined in the federal Super Circular and EDGAR.	Implementing
The State has a system in place to ensure that its Subrecipients are meeting the federal laws of the Super Circular and comply with the “supplement not supplant” requirements.	Implementing

Elements Requiring Next Steps:

- None

Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation:

- ADECE should continue their work to establish better communication strategies when reporting PDG activities and implementation progress to internal and external stakeholders.
- ADECE should continue to provide technical assistance to its newly established grantees to ensure seamless administration of the PDG program.
- ADECE must develop and communicate with ED officials how it intends to reconcile equipment purchased with federal funds to ensure the disposal or reuse of the equipment meets statutory regulations.