



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

November 4, 2016

Tonya Williams  
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education  
700 Main St  
Little Rock,  
AR 72201-1437

Dear Ms. Williams,

On October 17, 2016, Rebecca Marek from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) the Department conducted a Part B Desk Monitoring of Arkansas' implementation of its approved Preschool Development Grant (PDG)-Expansion Grant. 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 Preschool State Plan; and the fiscal management of the grant funds. It also helps us tailor technical assistance to each State's specific needs.

The desk monitoring included discussions related to all projects in the approved scope of work, including grants management, high quality new and improvement program, early learning standards, comprehensive services, workforce development, and sustainability.

Enclosed is a summary report based upon this review. The report includes highlights of Arkansas' implementation of PDG and a snapshot of Arkansas' progress under each PDG key areas. This report will be posted on the PDG website. The report includes "next steps" to ensure that Arkansas implements 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 cooperation during the Part B Desk monitoring process, and for your tremendous efforts in providing high quality preschool opportunities through the Preschool Development Grant. It is not necessary to provide a written response to this report. We hope you will continue to communicate any needs or concerns to your ED project officer.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

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

Enclosure

### PDG Site Visit Report

<b>Monitoring Information</b>	
<b>State Lead Agency</b>	Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
<b>State Participating Agency(s)</b>	
<b>Grant Period</b>	January 1, 2015-December 31, 2019
<b>Current Year of Grant</b>	January 1, 2016-December 31, 2016
<b>PDG Monitoring Period</b>	January 1, 2015 – October 15, 2016
<b>PDG Monitoring Activity (Desk or Onsite)</b>	Part B Desk Monitoring
<b>Monitoring Review Date(s)</b>	October 17, 2016
<b>State Participants/Project Leads</b>	Tonya Williams, Project Officer, Tassie McCollum, TA Program Specialist, Mary K, Coordinating Director, Susan Underwood, Program Evaluator and Instructional Manager
<b>U.S. Department of Education Project Officer(s)</b>	Rebecca Marek, Project Officer US Department of Education

#### *Overview of PDG Monitoring*

The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services (the Departments) are committed to supporting States as they implement the expansion of new and improved high quality preschool for eligible children through their PDG grant. Consistent with this commitment, the Departments have 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 Part B Desk Monitoring, State 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.

Arkansas was identified for a site visit based on the following factors:

- Arkansas is a PDG Expansion State and the Department is conducting Part B Desk Monitoring audits on all PDG grantees;
- To ensure Arkansas is carrying out their planned activities consistent with the timelines outlined in the State's Statement of Work; and
- To hear more about PDG and its coordination with the State's Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program and its annual developmental screening to determine individual needs.

The report contains the following sections:

- **Summary of Visit.** 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 Part B Desk Monitoring was held October 17, 2016. Prior to the call with the State, the ED project officer had a conversation with four of the PDG teachers pertaining to PDG implementation and eligibility as well as and outreach and professional development that has been provided by the State.

During the discussion Arkansas officials provided the Department with an abundance of pertinent grant materials prior to the conference call. Upon review of the documentation the Department was impressed that all elements of the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs were embedded into the contracts with each of the five High-Need Communities implementing PDG grants.

### ***Highlights of the State's PDG Implementation***

- 2,638 children are being served in high-quality preschool programs
- Arkansas developed a Family Engagement guide that provides foundational resources and supports for programs to build effective family engagement systems.
- Combining PDG funds with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has supported a number of assessment projects to ensure and improve quality in preschool programs. This includes creating a "best-in-class" set of Early Learning and Development Standards, developing a family engagement framework and state infrastructure, and selecting and piloting a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment.
- Development of a new Kindergarten Entry Screener, aligned to the Arkansas' Child Development Early Learning Standards, will provide strength based reports for parents, teachers, and administrators.
- One hundred percent of non-Federal matching funds have been obtained in first year.

***Status of Implementation of PDG***

In the Part B Desk Monitoring the Departments 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
<b>Capacity Building and Increasing Slots</b>	
The State public awareness and recruitment activities are targeted towards eligible 4 years old children in high need communities and families 200 percent below poverty.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
The State’s expansion efforts are targeted towards increasing the access to high quality preschool programs for 4 year olds.	Level 3-Sustaining & 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.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
<b>Subrecipient Monitoring</b>	
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.	Level 3-Sustaining & 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.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
The State is providing access comprehensive services to all children enrolled in the PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
<b>Birth to Third Grade Continuum</b>	
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.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
The State is implementing a data collection system for tracking student outcomes from prekindergarten to kindergarten entry through third grade.	Level 3-Sustaining & 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.	Level 3-Sustaining & Continuing Improvement
<b>Budget and Sustainability</b>	
The State has policies and procedures to track the State and Subrecipient budget activities to ensure that funds are expended according to State, Local and Federal procurement laws.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has in place a system to track the “use of funds” under the PDG grant.	Level 2-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.	Level 2-Implementing
<b>Fiscal Accountability</b>	
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.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has a system in place to ensure that its Subrecipients are meeting the federal laws of the Super Circular comply with the “supplement not supplant” requirements.	Level 2-Implementing

***Elements Requiring Next Steps:***

- Arkansas has recently experienced some turnover in staff and is in the process of replacing a position. Although the Department does not have concerns associated to the implementation of this grant, we recommend that the Project Officer provide careful attention to the changeover to new staff and the maintenance of grant files to ensure that progress of the grant is not interrupted and that accurate record-keeping is continued.
- As part of the grant requirement, Arkansas submitted a Scope of Work (SOW) that was reviewed and approved by the Department. The SOW should be updated monthly, a week prior to the monthly call, to consistently record timelines as they shift. Arkansas has not updated the SOW regularly. The project officer will continue to monitor the progress through monthly phone calls.

***Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation:*** None

***Additional Comment:*** None