



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

January 9, 2017

Linda Goodman
Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Goodman:

On September 12, 2016, a team from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) conducted a desk monitoring review of Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (OEC) 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 its 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 desk monitoring 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 OEC's implementation of PDG and a snapshot of Connecticut'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 OEC 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 Connecticut's technical assistance needs to ensure successful implementation of PDG. Thank you for your commitment to Connecticut's youngest children.

Sincerely,

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	Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood
State Participating Agency(s)	Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood
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)	Desk
Monitoring Review Date(s)	September 12, 2016
State Participants/Project Leads	Linda Goodman, Deputy Director Melissa L. Camacho, Project Manager
U.S. Department of Education Project Officer(s)	Tanesha Hembrey, Project Officer Priscilla Irvine, Project Officer

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 desk monitoring, Connecticut'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.

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

- Connecticut is a PDG Expansion State and the Department is conducting desk monitoring or onsite monitoring visits of all PDG grantees; and
- Connecticut 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 sub recipients 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 desk monitoring review for Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (OCE) was conducted on September 12, 2016. During the desk monitoring call ED and OCE 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. OCE provided documentation to ED officials before the scheduled desk review. ED officials 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

- With PDG funding, 10-hour school-day, and full school-year spaces have been introduced into local communities and fully utilized. Additionally, other state-funded and Head Start spaces have remained steady and fully-enrolled. The local School Readiness Council reports no dip in service by other PreK providers in the area. The data, combined with multiple meetings and conversations with School Readiness Councils and providers, helped to ensure that PDG would not lead to a diminution of services provided elsewhere in the community, but rather would introduce new spaces and/or improve existing spaces.
- The OEC has implemented the use of CLASS in PDG classrooms to ensure continuous improvement and program quality. CLASS observations are completed twice annually in each classroom and scores are provided to the OEC and shared with coaches to align professional development goals and CLASS scores. In Year 2, the OEC will begin using myTeachstone, an online platform that will make information sharing and CLASS score analyses easier among observers, teachers, administrators and coaches.

- Each School Readiness Council is responsible for monitoring program quality as well as compliance with all PDG grant requirements, including the 12 high-quality elements. Each School Readiness liaison conducts on-site visits and each has procedures and forms that are implemented as well as follow up protocols in cases of noncompliance. For example, in one district, the School Readiness Liaison has developed a School Readiness High-Quality Components Review form. This form is used to verify not only program quality, but also outreach and recruitment efforts of special populations (i.e. children with IEPs, children who are homeless etc.) and verifies each quality component including teacher salaries, class size and the provision and type of comprehensive services provided to PDG eligible students and their families.
- Within OEC's PDG family engagement quarterly meeting process, the Parent Teacher Home Visit Model (PTHVP) has been identified as a strategy to ensure family engagement in PDG. The first part is through the relational home visits where families and providers/teachers develop mutually trusting respectful relationships, which are a prerequisite to high-quality family engagement. Given that family engagement is a developmental process, this focus on relationships within PDG will build the capacity of PDG families to develop similar quality relationships with their children's teachers beginning in pre-kindergarten and continuing through the third grade and beyond. The second informational/home visit implementation of PTHVP will take place during the second half of PDG Year 2. This visit will offer an opportunity for families and providers/teachers to focus on smoothing the transition to kindergarten for participating families and their children. The information shared within the visit will align with and extend the other activities/preparation available within PDG and the communities for this important transition.

Status of Implementation of PDG

In the desk 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 sub recipients 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 sub recipients 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. Sub recipients, 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.	Level 2-Implementing
The State's expansion efforts are targeted towards increasing the access to high quality preschool programs for 4 year olds.	Level 2-Implementing
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 2-Implementing
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.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is on schedule with its monitoring of sub recipients to ensure that all of the high quality standards for Preschool are met within PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 3-Sustaining and Continuing Improvement
The State is providing access to comprehensive services to all children enrolled in the PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 3-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.	Level 2-Implementing
The State is implementing a data collection system for tracking student outcomes from prekindergarten to kindergarten entry through third grade.	Level 2-Implementing
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 2-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.	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 3-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.	Level 2-Implementing
The State has a system in place to ensure that its Sub recipients are meeting the federal laws of the Super Circular and comply with the “supplement not supplant” requirements.	Level 2-Implementing

Elements Requiring Next Steps:

- None

Recommendation to Strengthen Implementation:

- Connecticut should continue its outreach and recruitment of hard-to-reach families. OEC has targeted families of children who are homeless, in foster care, and dual language learners. Inclusion of children with IEPs is also a priority.