



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

November 2, 2016

Nasha Patel
Louisiana Department of Education
201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Nasha Patel:

On July 15, 2016, a team from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) (the Department) conducted a desk monitoring of the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDE) implementation of its approved Preschool Development Grant (PDG-D). 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. Before the call with the State, ED project officers had a conference call with two of the teachers who work in PDG classrooms.

Enclosed is a summary report based upon this review. The report includes highlights of LDE's implementation of PDG and a snapshot of Louisiana'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 LDE 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 the time you set-aside for the monitoring call, 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 LDE's technical assistance needs to ensure successful implementation of PDG. Thank you for your commitment to Louisiana's youngest children.

Sincerely,

/s/

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

Enclosure

Louisiana's PDG Desk Monitoring Report

Monitoring Information	
State Lead Agency	Louisiana Department of Education
Grant Period	01/01/2014 – 12/31/2018
PDG Monitoring Period	01/01/2015 – 12/31/2016
PDG Monitoring Activity	Part B Desk Monitoring
Monitoring Review Date(s)	July 15, 2016
State Participants	Nasha Patel, Interim Director Yshauna Sanders Ashley Stevens Lindsey Bradford
U.S. Department of Education	Rebecca Marek, Lead Project Officer Miriam Lund, 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 onsite monitoring, Louisiana's implementation of PDG was reviewed across several key areas which represent the core priorities for implementation as outlined in the PDG Monitoring Tool: Capacity Building and Increasing Slots, Subrecipient Monitoring, Birth to Third Grade Continuum, Budget and Sustainability, and Fiscal Accountability. 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.

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

- Louisiana is a PDG Expansion State and the Department is conducting monitoring calls to all PDG Expansion grantees;
- Louisiana has some concern in meeting the goal for KEA, as Louisiana is still piloting their KEA, and reporting all the demographic data since we do not have a data system that supports gathering all of the demographic data yet

The report contains the following sections:

- ***Summary of Call.*** This section describes, in brief, the topics covered and personnel participation.
- ***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 Comments.*** As appropriate, this section includes any additional information related to the State’s implementation of PDG not included elsewhere.

Summary of Visit

The PDG desktop monitoring call for Louisiana was conducted on July 15, 2016. During the first 30 minutes of the call, ED project officers had a conversation with two 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.

The remaining hour and 30 minutes of the monitoring call was between ED project officers and LDE PDG officials. During the discussion LDE officials openly identified meeting the goal for KEA, and reporting all the demographic data challenges to PDG implementation.

Highlights of the State’s PDG Implementation

- Through community coordination and streamlined applications across provider types, families and children are benefitting from grant-supported partnerships to support mixed delivery and family choice. Additionally, in Year 1, over 770 children in these communities accessed seats in classrooms that were improved through job-embedded coaching and access to comprehensive services. Communities are leveraging local partnerships to ensure at-risk families can access comprehensive services, including health screenings and support.
- LDE has been able to double the number of New and Improved slots for 4-year olds the state originally committed to and is offering 1000 seats in Year 2 of the grant.
- Implementation of LDE’s Early Childhood Care and Education Network has been a huge success. Ninety-eight percent of classrooms were observed in the fall and spring. LDE is preparing to release this years practice performance profiles which include performance ratings and profiles. The state is also planning to support communities to implement an improved Coordinated Enrollment system next year.
- LDE is preparing to release their practice performance profiles from this year with stakes attached to performance ratings and profiles. They will also be supporting communities to increase sophistication of Coordinated Enrollment for next year

Status of Implementation of PDG

In 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.	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
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 2-Developing
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 2-Developing
The State is providing access to comprehensive services to all children enrolled in the PDG funded preschool classrooms.	Level 2-Implementing
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	Level 1-Developing

children for kindergarten thru third grade.	
The State is implementing a data collection system for tracking student outcomes from prekindergarten to kindergarten entry through third grade.	Level 1- Developing
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 1-Developing
Budget and Sustainability	
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 - Developing
The State has in place a system to track the “use of funds” under the PDG grant.	Level 2 - Developing
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 - Developing
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 Subrecipients 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

Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation:

- The Department has concerns related to Louisiana’s meeting the goal for KEA participation. Currently, Louisiana is still piloting their KEA, and experiencing difficulty reporting their demographic data since their data system does not yet include demographic data. The Department will continue to work closely with Louisiana to monitor the progress of the KEA pilot.

Additional Comment:

- Louisiana has obligated grant funds according to its budget. However, because the funds are expended throughout the school year rather than the calendar year, most funds will not be drawn down until the calendar year after the funds have been awarded. While this is not a concern, the Department will continue to work closely with Louisiana to monitor the progress of its spending.