

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Connecticut





U.S. Department of Education PDG Grant Performance Report Cover Sheet

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Check only one box per Program Office instructions. Annual Performance Report Final Performance Report

General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419B150006 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 09

3. Project Title: Federal Preschool Development Grant-Expansion Grant

4. Grantee Name: Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

5. Grantee Address: 450 Columbus Blvd Suite 304

City: Hartford State: Connecticut Zip: 06103

6. Project Director Name: Jennifer Johnson

Title: Director, Division of Quality Improvement

Phone #: (860) 500-4538 Ext.: _____ Fax #: _____

Email Address: jenn.m.johnson@ct.gov

Reporting Period Information

7. Reporting Period: From: 01/01/2016 To: 12/31/2016

8. Budget Expenditures (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

Budget Period	Federal Grant Funds	Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share)
a. Previous Budget Period	\$12,499,000.00	\$4,654,582.00
b. Current Budget Period	\$11,689,109.00	\$2,746,473.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

9. Indirect Cost Information (To be completed by your Business Office. See instructions.)

- a. Are you claiming indirect costs under this grant? Yes No
- b. If yes, do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal Government? Yes No
- c. If yes, provide the following information:
- Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: _____ To: _____
- Approving Federal agency: ED Other Specify other: _____
- Type of Rate: (Final Performance Reports only) Provisional Final Other Specify other: _____
- d. For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:
- Is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Complies with 34 CFR 76.564(c)(2)?

10. Performance Measures Status

- a. Are complete data on performance measures for the current budget period included in the Project Status Chart? Yes No
- b. If no, when will the data be available and submitted to the Department? 08/30/2017



U.S. Department of Education PDG Annual Performance Report Executive Summary

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: CT

PR/Award #: S419B150006

You are required to submit an Executive Summary of up to 3000 words with your Annual Performance Report. This summary should relate to your approved application and summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant, what you learned, and any evaluation results. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered. If there have been any changes to the project from the approved application, those should be explained as well.

The start of the second year of PDG in CT began on July 1, 2016, at which time PDG was moved into the newly established Quality Improvement (QI) Division of the OEC. The QI Division has since outlined a clear vision of early childhood quality improvement for the state, focusing on five pillars of quality: Health and Safety; Workforce Qualifications; Program Leadership; Family Engagement; and, Learning Environments. Since October of 2016, the QI division has conducted 12 listening sessions with approximately 300 members of the public to further inform CT's quality improvement work and that of the future Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). Feedback from these listening sessions, along with lessons learned from PDG implementation, as well as expertise from local and national partners will inform and advance Connecticut's QRIS work.

In 2016 the OEC officially launched the Early Care and Education component of the state's Early Childhood Information System (ECE-ECIS). The ECE-ECIS is a secure online data system that will allow the OEC to collect and monitor data to make informed program and policy decisions affecting young children birth to age five. All early childhood programs receiving public funds are required to participate in ECE-ECIS including PDG. Launched in October 2016 after a series of setbacks related to technological glitches, ECE-ECIS now contains 15,004 unduplicated state and PDG funded children. 240 out of 730 PDG eligible children are currently not in the system but will be uploaded in March 2017 after the release of a batch upload function made available to programs in February 2017. This function will help larger programs upload children into ECE-ECIS all at once, rather than one-by-one, reducing the likelihood of error and duplication of children in the system.

In addition to using ECE-ECIS as a tool to track, monitor and analyze data, the OEC has also refined and implemented new monitoring tools in the second year of PDG implementation to assess subrecipient compliance at the state level, as well as help subrecipients assess their own compliance at the local level. One such tool is the Corrective Action Plan (CAP), a formal document that outlines the issue(s) of noncompliance and requires subrecipients to document and provide timelines of how compliance will be attained. To date, four CAPs have been issued and returned with satisfactory plans to resolve issues of noncompliance. Additionally, the PDG Project Manager for Data and Accountability has been involved in the development of a new monitoring tool for all state-funded programs. Together with managers of state funded programs, a tool that integrates all requirements including PDG, is being developed. This new tool will be launched in the Spring of 2017 and will be piloted with PDG subrecipients as well as other state funded programs; it will classify subrecipients and programs into low, medium and high risk categories in order to better target technical assistance and other support services to programs and to ensure compliance with all federal and state funded grant requirements.

The PDG Project Manager for Data and Accountability has also made an effort to transition existing data collection and reporting efforts to electronic and web-based applications. This shift has helped both PDG project managers to track and analyze data with greater efficiency, as well as programs to submit information in a more expedient manner. In the past, many forms and surveys were completed using word documents that needed to be printed, completed and then collected in-person, mailed, scanned or faxed to the OEC for review. This process has made the completion and collection of forms burdensome on both programs and the OEC. Thus far, feedback from subrecipients about using electronic and web-based forms has been positive. Additionally, the OEC's School Readiness program has followed suit, now utilizing the same web-based application to submit their annual RFPs and end-of-year reports.

In year two the OEC has continued using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool in PDG classrooms but has made significant changes in how data is tracked, analyzed and shared for the purposes of program improvement. In year one, CLASS observation data was collected in hardcopy and analyzed by hand, which made the assessment of trends difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, the OEC quickly realized that sharing CLASS observation data with coaches, who could use the data as part of teacher development and goal setting, was both cumbersome and not secure. It became obvious that something needed to be done to ensure data was collected in a more efficient and secure manner and shared in a timely fashion to ensure program improvement.

Beginning in August 2016 PDG began using myTeachstone, an online subscription service designed to combine CLASS observation data with individualized professional development resources and ease the sharing of CLASS data through a secure portal. To date, 51 CLASS observations have been completed using the online tool. A full analyses of CLASS scores within and across the first and second year of PDG programming will not be available until June 2017.

Just as CLASS is used to improve quality in PDG classrooms, so too are services that enhance social and emotional wellbeing for children, such as the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), an evidence-based early childhood mental health consultation model. In year two ECCP has continued to provide its core classroom and child-specific services in every PDG classroom. As of December 31, 2016, 41 of 55 classroom contracts were underway, serving 97 teachers and teaching assistants as well as 590 unduplicated children. Of the children served, 40 have received child-specific services that included a home visit and targeted interventions based on the child and family's needs. 94% of teachers who have received ECCP consultation to date, agree or strongly agree that they have a better understanding of how to address social-emotional and behavioral issues in their classrooms. That same percentage of teachers reported that they agree or strongly agree that there have been improvements in the social-emotional environment in their classrooms. Furthermore, 100% of parents that participated in child-specific services reported that they were able to use the strategies outlined in the action plan for their child. Of those parents, 73% reported noticing changes made by the classroom teacher to accommodate their child's specific needs and 94% reported seeing improvements in their child's behavior.

To build upon the successful efforts of ECCP in improving children's social-emotional wellbeing, in November 2016 PDG was also a part of Connecticut's effort in becoming a member of the Pyramid Model Consortium to strengthen practices and services that enhance children's social and emotional wellbeing across the state. Collaboratively with the Connecticut State Department of Education-Office of Special Education and the Head Start Collaboration Office, PDG will help pilot policies, practices and other evidenced-based models from the consortium that will be rolled out to other state funded programs and into the work of the OEC's Quality Improvement Division and future QRIS. Four OEC staff members, including the coordinator of PDG workforce development, will attend the National Training Institute's conference in April which will provide an in-depth learning experience built around the Pyramid Model.

PDG is also improving quality within PDG classrooms by way of high-quality professional learning opportunities, namely through the provision of ECCP, individualized coaching, and tailored family engagement support and technical assistance. At the close of year one, results from a third-party evaluation however, revealed that subrecipients regarded the three components as disjointed. In response to these findings, the OEC developed the PDG Professional Learning Collaborative as a means to provide an integrated approach that would better serve communities and classrooms. The Collaborative was launched in March 2016 and together, the Project Manager for Family Engagement, ECCP Consultants, and Program & Instructional Support Coaches prioritize work through regular meetings and ongoing collaboration to provide: an environment for sharing and receiving feedback and support; an opportunity to develop consistent messaging through the adoption of a shared set of goals; and supports for a culture of continued growth and development for the Collaborative and for communities and programs.

To date, the Collaborative has met five times and developed a shared set of goals and intended outcomes as well as a process for sharing information and providing regular updates. The Collaborative also meets to set the agenda for the professional learning that occurs at the technical assistance level (i.e. for coaches, ECCP consultants and family engagement specialists). The OEC hopes that the third-party evaluation will show improvements with regard to the Collaborative development and the delivery of high-quality professional development.

An additional high-quality component continues to be the deepening of family engagement in the 13 PDG

communities by employing meaningful, culturally appropriate strategies utilizing a quarterly meeting process. The quarterly meetings are facilitated by the Project Manager for Family Engagement and create a context in which community teams reflect on their practices, review promising strategies, and develop plans for deepening family engagement. Teams include teachers, administrators, and families as well as including those who interact with children and families on a daily basis, to the extent they are willing and able to participate. Other community stake-holders are welcomed and invited to participate.

Year two saw the integration of families into the quarterly meeting process. All communities have family participation as an action step on their Roadmaps and update their successes and challenges on a quarterly basis. Communities without family participation are currently being asked for an action plan on how they will secure parent participation in year 3, including consulting with communities who have been successful. Currently, 9 of 13 communities currently include families.

Several communities have worried out loud that families won't be comfortable, that they will be bored, or that they won't participate and have been hesitant to invite families. In the case of the communities who have secured family participation, none of these predictions have materialized. Families are participating enthusiastically and demonstrating, without exception, that they bring to the table exactly what is needed in the process - a passion for their children's education, a desire to participate, and knowledge of their children, their families, their neighborhoods, and their cultures - knowledge we need to optimally support their children's learning. Hopefully, the three communities who have apprehensions will be inspired by their colleagues who are excited about their family participation.

To provide structure for the quarterly meetings, a set of organizing principles was identified during year one and states that the work be strengths-based, be family-centered, be focused on quality relationships, be linked to learning, be community-specific and build capacity of both teachers and families. Utilizing these organizing principles, engagement in year one focused on identifying where communities were, where they wanted to be and how they wanted to get there.

In year one, community teams adopted four high-quality frameworks and strategies for use in all 13 communities. The strategies include: the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships; Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement Toolkit for Parents and Community Partners; the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP); and, the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality Measures (FPTRQ).

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework provides communities with the compass for their work; the Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement Toolkit provides them with a Roadmap that will document how they want to "get there;" PTHVP relational home visits "jump start" the all-important relationships between family and teachers - home and school; and the FPTRQ assesses progress along the way.

Inspired by the case study in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, PDG identified PTHVP as a means of launching family engagement efforts within its classrooms in year two. In June 2016 the OEC trained 101 staff on the use of PTHVP, and 62 staff across all 13 communities opted into the program to conduct home visits. To date, 200 visits have been conducted.

The relational home visits provided through PTHVP provide an opportunity to visit families with no agenda other than to listen to their hopes and dreams for their children. This model can be used even in programs with an existing home visiting component, such as Head Start. Feedback has been very positive from those who have engaged in PTHVP home visits, one teacher within a Head Start/PDG program expressed appreciation for the opportunity to visit her families first, just to listen, prior to subsequent visits in which agendas are required by Head Start standards.

Another teacher, who at first was apprehensive about participating in PTHVP, declared after her first visit that she "learned so much!" and looks forward to her next. Another teacher commented that she too, was hesitant to participate, but was quick to add that she has never had the quality of relationships with families that she now has with those who hosted home visits.

Additionally, a mother who received a home visit commented that she had been nervous before the visit, but by the time her child's teacher left, she felt very comfortable "being herself." She also commented that she

feels so much more confident initiating interaction with the teacher and asking questions. Multiple teachers have also reported how thrilled children are when they conduct a visit. One teacher overheard a child bragging to his classroom friend, "My teacher came to my house. Did she come to yours?"

Every home visit log provides examples of what program staff learned from the home visits. In some cases, they were able to identify assumptions made before the visit that proved to be inaccurate, and others identified ways to use what they learned to support children's learning in the classroom. Many recognized the significant potential of parents to contribute in day-to-day classroom activities.

The potential of the PTHVP relational home visit to "jump start" mutually respectful trusting relationships with families is demonstrated in a variety of ways after reviewing logs from just one visit, and it contributes to the capacity of both teachers and families to serve as co-educators of children.

Satisfaction surveys are being designed to quantify the impact of the home visits on program staff and families, results will be available in the summer of 2017. The OEC will also use indicators from national research documenting the significant impact of PTHVP on child outcomes to assess impact within PDG. Indicators include increased attendance, decreased behavior problems and increased parent participation in school activities.

Another tool that is being used to measure the deepening of family engagement is the FPTRQ and family and teacher surveys are conducted in October and May of each year. In year one, administration of the FPTRQ was challenging; the learning curve was steep for all involved; full implementation was demanding on both subrecipients and OEC staff. One setback was the timing of the first round of survey administration, which included pre and post survey dates that were closer together than desired. However, the second round proved more timely, and the OEC has overcome obstacles relative to distribution, instruction, collection, confidentiality and validity of surveys. Additionally, the OEC will begin implementing the FPTRQ using a web-based application which should increase return rates and ensure surveys are fully completed.

While FPTRQ measures are designed to obtain a comprehensive picture of the quality of relationships fundamental to high- quality family engagement, the instrument is new, and as yet, there are no definitions for high or low scores. To-date, the measures have not been used to test associations with child or family outcomes. Scores can be compared to the findings from a field study and pilot test which are included in the FPTRQ: Updated User's Manual. PDG community *total* scores all fall in the 200s; the field test scores all fall within the 100s, yielding a favorable comparison. The maximum total score possible is 261, and the lowest is 66. PDG sites' highest score was 248; the lowest score was 217.

In addition to the total scores described above, FPTRQ provides scores for four constructs: *knowledge*; *practices*; *attitudes*; and *environmental features*. The overall PDG third party evaluation includes total scores and scores on three of the four constructs - knowledge, practices, and attitudes.

During the 2015-2016 school year, three communities saw their *total*, *knowledge*, and *practices* scores improve pre-test to post-test. Ten communities saw improvements in their *practices* scores. This information provides some information as to improvements made however, given the newness of the tool, the significance of the improvement is unknown. Final analysis of the FPTRQ results will be provided within the third party evaluation report.

PDG is committed to supporting communities in developing a seamless birth-third grade continuum that ensures a smooth transition for children. To that end, several efforts are being implemented:

1. In addition to the relational visits provided through PTHVP, the model also includes informational home visits which will be conducted in the spring of 2017. The focus of the informational home visits will be on transition to kindergarten. Staff have been prepped for these home visits, and community teams have reviewed two promising strategies relative to transition to kindergarten - The Building Bridges Interactive Case and Ready4K!
2. The PDG Birth-Third Grade Advisory Group was established. Participants include members of the OEC, SDE, and three fellows of the first cohort of the UCONN PK-3 Leadership Group. The Advisory Group

will oversee PDG birth-third grade continuum efforts throughout the remaining years of the grant.

3. SDE and OEC are collaborating in the development of an online toolkit for kindergarten transition. Community teams will serve as focus group participants and support formative and summative evaluation efforts regarding the toolkit. Professional development for teachers will be designed to support use of the toolkit.

In year two, the federal Preschool Development-Expansion Grant (PDG) has allowed the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to expand access to high-quality preschool programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 730 eligible preschoolers. The OEC has built on the successful implementation of PDG in year one by streamlining, further refining and enhancing key components of high-quality, making year two even more effective and meaningful for eligible children and families throughout the state.



U.S. Department of Education
PDG Annual Performance Report
Grant Status Form
Explanation of Progress (524B Section A)

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: CT

PR/Award #: S419B150006

Section A: Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (narrative)

1. Project Objective

1(a) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant. Describe the State's progress in meeting this Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure based on enrollment of Eligible Children in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant as of December 1, 2016.

As of December 1, 2016, Connecticut's PDG was supporting the delivery of high-quality preschool to 703 eligible four-year olds. This represents 96% enrollment of our target 730 eligible children. Of those eligible children enrolled, 60% were in expansion spaces and 40% in improved spaces. Additionally, eligible children were served in 55 classrooms within 37 programs and across 13 communities.

There are several factors that have contributed to the overall enrollment of eligible children served in PDG programs, they include:

- Increasing School Readiness Liaison hours
- Regular monitoring of outreach and recruitment efforts
- Regular monitoring using monthly enrollment reports as well as tracking wait lists
- Helping subrecipients to implement community-coordinated systematic outreach and recruitment plans
- Regular quarterly family engagement meetings and bimonthly School Readiness Liaison meetings in which subrecipients can discuss challenges and/or concerns regarding outreach and recruitment efforts

In Connecticut, the 13 subrecipients of the PDG are existing School Readiness Councils which employ a full or part-time School Readiness Liaison to act as a single point of contact for the OEC and to coordinate all of the activities of the Council. Councils are primarily responsible for coordinating Connecticut's School Readiness program, including the distribution of spaces to high-quality programs. PDG funds were used in the first year of implementation to expand the hours of 12 PDG Liaison positions by an average of 20 hours per week. These positions oversee local PDG implementation and perform monitoring functions in order to ensure all PDG requirements are met at the provider level in order to remain complaint. In year 2, these positions continued to be funded.

Another major resource available to assist subrecipients in the enrollment of eligible children is the Family Engagement Project Manager, whose primary work includes deepening local family engagement practices by working with subrecipients to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. The project manager

supports communities in meeting their outreach and recruitment goals utilizing the PDG Outreach & Recruitment Plan. The plan is designed to be a resource rather than a prescriptive document, and is designed to serve three purposes to:

1. support a community-coordinated, systematic outreach effort with accountability that will enhance Connecticut's capacity to identify, recruit, and serve PDG-eligible children, giving priority to children who are homeless, in foster care, and dual language learners while ensuring enrollment of children with IEPs that reflects their representation in their communities
2. document and monitor the efforts described above
3. share and disseminate promising and proven outreach and recruitment strategies among Connecticut's 13 PDG communities

PDG communities have been encouraged to go where prospective hard-to-reach PDG families are likely to be rather than just distribute flyers. Where flyers are used, teams have been encouraged to distribute them in person, so they can speak to prospective families directly and begin to overcome any hesitancy among families in engaging with community programs like PDG.

Based on information submitted by early learning providers in PDG Interim Reports, various strategies were implemented which helped to increase enrollment of eligible children in PDG funded programs. Across PDG provider sites, the most widely used methods of recruitment included (from most widely used to least used): distribution of flyers at recreational venues (95%), distribution of flyers at offices and events of community partners who may already engage with prospective PDG families (92.86%), distribution of flyers to businesses likely doing business with prospective PDG families (89.29%), keeping United Way Child Care 2-1-1 updated regarding available PDG spaces (82.14%), use of social media to promote PDG enrollment (75%), neighborhood walks or door-to-door canvassing in locations where prospective PDG families may reside (42.86%), and web banner ads promoting PDG enrollment on community web sites (21.43%).

Monthly enrollment reports are submitted for review and tracking of enrollment efforts across programs and communities. These reports are submitted electronically a week after the close of each monthly enrollment period. A trend analyses is then created and shared with the Project Manager for Family Engagement to target technical assistance in those communities where enrollment can be improved.

The OEC credits formal outreach and recruitment plans in helping subrecipients overcome barriers they saw in the previous year regarding enrollment of eligible children served. Data shows that in September of 2015, 85% of spaces were filled whereas during the same time period in 2016, 95% were filled. Monthly enrollment reports indicate that every month in 2016, from September through December, saw higher rates of enrollment of eligible children when compared to those same months in 2015 --showing that subrecipients were better at targeting eligible children and their families and enrolling them sooner. As mentioned previously, as of December 1, 2016, 96% of PDG spaces were filled, up from 88% when compared to December 1, 2015.

Connecticut's PDG enrollment figures also include data on the enrollment of the three priority groups of children outlined in the grant: children who are experiencing homelessness, dual language learners, and/or in foster care. Given the importance of recruiting children from these priority populations, communities have been encouraged to develop relationships with the McKinney-Vento liaisons in their districts as well as Department of Children and Families (DCF) representatives from their regions. According to the PDG Interim Reports, 54% of PDG program providers have developed relationships with their McKinney-Vento Liaisons and 62% with regional DCF representatives. As of December 1, 2016, 3% of eligible children enrolled in PDG spaces were experiencing homelessness (steady from 2015), 24% were English language learners (up 8% from 2015), and 1% were involved in the child

welfare system (steady from 2015).

The OEC has not established targets for enrollment of children who are experiencing homelessness, dual language learners or in foster care. That said, in year one the OEC stated it would explore strategies and opportunities to increase the number of eligible children served within these priority populations.

According to a policy brief published by the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet in 2015 regarding families experiencing homelessness with young children, estimates of the number of children experiencing homelessness ages 0-5 in Connecticut range from 3,621 to 12,914. These estimates reveal that the percentage of all four-year olds in the state who are experiencing homelessness is between 2% and 6%. The percentage of PDG children who are experiencing homelessness, as of December 1, 2016 is 3%.

Additionally, according to the CT State Department of Education's Data Bulletin, in school year 2014-2015, 24.5% of children in grades K-1 were English Language Learners. While there is no data that exists specifically on the number of four-year olds in the state who are English Learners, the OEC believes SDE K-1 data is reliable when estimating this figure. As of December 1, 2016, 25% of all children enrolled in PDG were English Language Learners.

In year two, the OEC worked closely with its sister agency, the Department of Children and Families, to better understand the total number of four-year olds who were in foster care across the 13 PDG communities. A close inspection of data revealed that the total number of four-year olds who were in foster care was 42, 54 and 66 in fiscal years 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively --this retrospective data provided a high-level understanding that, when compared with the general population of four-year olds in PDG communities, the pool of eligible children was relatively small (less than 1%). Additionally, data was provided on all children in foster care who would turn four-years-old by January 1, 2017 (Connecticut's cut off age), which would help the OEC better understand the anticipated enrollment in year two. Data revealed only 42 children across 13 communities who would turn four-years-old by January 1, 2017. This data was shared with subrecipients, so they could plan and conduct outreach accordingly with local DCF offices in their region. As of December 1, 2016, 1% of eligible children in PDG classrooms were in foster care.

As indicated previously, the OEC has no required enrollment thresholds for eligible children who are experiencing homelessness, dual language learners, or in foster care. However, using the data outlined above has provided the OEC with some insight as to its relative success in enrolling these vulnerable populations in their naturally occurring proportions within the general population. The OEC will continue to analyze data and future trends to ensure that appropriate outreach and recruitment of eligible children within special at-risk populations remains a priority.

In addition to the priority populations described above, children with IEPs are also included in PDG classrooms as required in Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA). Our target for enrollment of children with disabilities is 8.2%, the 2016 percentage of four-year-olds served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA. As of December 1, 2016, children with IEPs represented 6% of children in PDG classrooms, a decrease of 5% when compared to December 1, 2015 enrollment figures.

The number of children with IEPs in PDG classrooms is slightly lower than the statewide percentage. At the beginning of year 1, we defined representation of children with disabilities at 8.2% and made clear to subgrantees that all should be actively recruiting and enrolling children with disabilities. However, in year 2 we "softened" our approach and guidance to subgrantees related to enrolling children with disabilities based on our experience with the following issues:

- having many communities significantly exceeding our target of 8.2% children with disabilities, in some cases as high as 25% within a community and up to 43% within a program
- consultants and coaches observing the effects on typically developing children in classrooms that significantly exceed 8.2% of CWD
- teachers distressed relative to their challenges in meeting the needs of all children in their classrooms when they served a high percentage of high need children.

Our “softened” approach was that while we continued to emphasize the necessity of enrolling 8.2% children with disabilities, we did not insist on that figure from the beginning of the program year. In other words, we provided guidance to community teams that they should shift their focus from recruiting children with existing disabilities at the time of enrollment, and instead focus on the necessity to ensure:

- developmental screening occurred in a timely manner in PDG classrooms
- referrals were made expeditiously to identify children with disabilities and ensure supports were put in place quickly.

We did however, state that no child with a disability upon enrollment should be turned away as long as they meet the minimum age and income requirements.

We believe this “softened” approach is the reason the percentage of children with disabilities dropped so dramatically from December 2015 to December 2016, it is important to note however, that this drop was intentional for the reasons described above.

The OEC is confident this percentage will increase as the year progresses without added efforts to specifically recruit more children with disabilities. As of December 1, 2016, 17 programs reported having no children with disabilities enrolled in their classrooms however, those same programs reported referring 14 children to the local school district for further testing and evaluation after initial screening was conducted. An additional 28 children are also being referred by programs who already have some representation of children with IEPs in their classrooms, making the total number of children referred for further evaluation an additional 6% of total enrollment. It is likely that a number of IEPs will result from these referrals, which will increase the actual percentage of children with IEPs.

After analyzing data trends from year one enrollment, the number of children with IEPs fluctuated from 4% up to 11% and then down to 10% at the close of the school year. Just as in year one, the OEC expects the percentage of children with disabilities to fluctuate as the year progresses and as children are screened and referred for further evaluation and testing.

While we want to avoid enrollment of children with disabilities in numbers that significantly exceed our 8.2% target, we are making every effort to reach that target.

We will begin by closely monitoring the referrals made by subgrantees and tracking what percentage result in an IEP. Additionally, we will target communities where there may be room to increase the number of children with IEPs when compared to the community's overall four year olds served by IDEA 619, part B. Thus far we have identified four communities whose overall total of four year olds served by 619, Part B is more than the current total of PDG children with IEPs in that community. We will begin this process by surveying each of these four communities and perhaps others as well.

We will survey them regarding enrollment by asking the following questions.

- What barriers have you identified to enrollment of children with IEPs in PDG classrooms and what actions have you planned to address those barriers?

- What do you know about the enrollment of children in your local school district ECSE program? Were those children candidates for enrollment in PDG prior to enrolling in the district program?
- In classrooms that are mixed-age, mixed income, how many non-PDG-eligible children with IEPs are enrolled? How many have been referred for further evaluation?

After collecting all of this information, we will develop next steps where appropriate to meet, but not significantly exceed, the 8.2% goal.

We can also intensify our efforts to collaborate with our colleagues in Birth to Three to ensure that their families are informed about PDG as an option for their children when they turn four.

While outreach at the community level should already include collaboration with various home visiting networks (i.e. Nurturing Families Network, Parents as Teachers, Family Resource Centers, Child FIRST, MIECHV, etc.) to identify PDG-eligible children and children with disabilities, we can address that collaboration at the agency level going forward.

Overall, the OEC has met its target number and percentage of eligible children served in high-quality preschool programs funded by the grant as outlined in its original application. Year two saw an increase in available PDG spaces for eligible children, and currently provides 730 spaces, up from 712 in year one. As of December 1, 2016, 96% of those spaces had been filled. The OEC is currently working with those programs that have consistently had one or two spaces unutilized to understand the barriers to enrollment and/or to reallocate spaces. Of course, the OEC will continue to monitor enrollment and work towards implementing best practices with regard to outreach and recruitment of eligible families.

Please describe, as required in Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA), how the State established policies and procedures that ensure that the percentage of Eligible Children with disabilities served by the High-Quality Preschool Programs is not less than either the percentage of four-year-old children served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), or the current national average, whichever is greater.

Note: The current national percentage of four year-old-children receiving services through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 6.4%. Source: 2012 IDEA Part B Child Count (www.ideadata.org). States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

As per Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA), the OEC was to establish policies and procedures that ensure the percentage of eligible children with disabilities served by the high-quality preschool programs is not less than either the percentage of four-year old children served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA, or the current national average, whichever is greater.

Currently, Connecticut's percentage of four-year-olds served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 8.2%, higher than the national average and the target for enrollment in the state. The PDG enrollment of children with disabilities was 6% as of December 1, 2016.

While the OEC has not met its target of serving eligible children with disabilities across all 13 participating communities, further analysis of the data indicates that at the program level, some high-quality programs have enrolled a higher percentage of children with disabilities than others. 17 programs of 37 have no children with disabilities enrolled at all. While these providers have no children with disabilities enrolled as of December 1, 2016, they have, in fact, referred 14 children to

the local school district for further evaluation. It is likely that one or more IEPs will result from further evaluation from the school district.

While the OEC strongly supports efforts to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in high-quality PDG classrooms, there is concern when the number of children with disabilities significantly exceeds their representation in the general population, especially in PDG classrooms with low income eligibility requirements and where priority is given to enrollment of children who are experiencing homelessness, in foster care and dual language learners --all potential risk factors for developmental delay. The OEC recognizes that in order to meet the needs of all enrolled children, classrooms need to have some balance of children with special needs and children who are developing typically. To that end, the OEC continues to work with subrecipients and early learning providers to enroll at least one child with an IEP but no more than two children in a single classroom - numbers that represent the presence of 4-year old children with disabilities in the general school population in Connecticut. That being said, given PDG's priority populations, it is likely that enrollment of children with disabilities meeting or exceeding the target 8.2% will occur as the program year progresses. We will continue to consider strategies to address this issue.

As previously mentioned, one of the biggest challenges faced by the OEC in supporting children with disabilities has been to collaborate with local school districts to ensure that special education and related services are delivered within the PDG classroom in a timely manner.

Despite efforts to collaborate with school districts, delivery of special education and related services within the routines and activities in the PDG classroom remains a challenge. In last year's APR, we discussed the assumption on the part of providers and school districts that the long-standing practice of community programs and school districts "sharing" children with disabilities would prevail. This practice:

- results in children being absent from the preschool classroom for several hours per day missing important social and educational opportunities
- imposes additional challenging transitions on the children involved
- requires adaptation to two very different classroom settings and routines and two different groups of children
- increases the number of adult relationships to be navigated
- interferes with nap-time
- can increase the length of the school day.

Add to those challenges the fact that delivery of services in the classroom is best practice. OEC is committed to collaborating with local school districts to ensure inclusion in PDG classrooms as well as individualized accommodations and supports to avoid families having to choose between the PDG classroom and district-provided special education and related services.

The OEC will continue to collaborate with colleagues at the State Department of Education, subrecipients, early learning providers, early childhood special education coordinators, and other school district and community partners to identify, recruit, enroll, and serve children with disabilities in all PDG settings.

Describe the State's progress in increasing the number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant.

As of December 1, 2016, Connecticut's PDG was supporting the delivery of high-quality preschool to 703 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 55 classrooms throughout the state (96% of our target of 730 eligible children). Of those eligible children served, 60% were in expansion spaces and 40% in improved spaces.

As mentioned previously, the OEC uses existing School Readiness Councils to implement PDG at the local level. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness Program. It is imperative that PDG efforts coordinate with this existing state preschool program to affect the overall number and percentage of eligible children served.

Connecticut's PDG has supported the enhancement of 13 School Readiness Liaison positions by increasing the hours of part-time positions. The expansion of these positions has contributed to an increase in the overall number and percent of eligible children enrolled in PDG, given that Liaisons help to coordinate local outreach and recruitment efforts with support from the OEC, as well as identify opportunities in their communities for expansion of high-quality spaces. Additionally, Liaisons monitor enrollment data and report figures to the OEC on an ongoing basis.

Using the existing School Readiness Council infrastructure was critical to increasing the number of eligible children in high-quality programs. All councils follow General Policies (GPs) created by the OEC to ensure quality in early childhood settings as well as outline processes, procedures, rules and guidance when using School Readiness funds. In many instances, these GPs were used for PDG, except in cases where federal regulations were different. For example, GPs outline processes for programs to adhere to regarding licensing, NAEYC accreditation and interim quality measures if programs are in the process of acquiring NAEYC accreditation. Additionally, GPs provide information related to compliance with the Early Childhood Professional Registry, a registry that all state and PDG funded staff must use to verify qualifications and credentials for working in early childhood settings. All but six PDG funded programs received state funds and were familiar with the GPs prior to PDG. Additionally, the six remaining programs are now becoming familiar with the GPs and have since improved the quality of their programs by implementing many of these policies and procedures.

School Readiness Councils are also comprised of many individuals and stakeholders who have been key members of on-the-ground implementation of PDG. Councils consist of parents, teachers, police officers, librarians, school district personnel, health and wellness providers, pediatricians and many others who care about the wellbeing of young children in their community. These individuals were some of the first to be included on PDG family engagement teams, the PDG Birth to Third Grade Advisory Council and to inform professional learning. Their input has been invaluable to understanding existing early childhood practices within each community and helping to increase enrollment and quality in PDG and other early childhood programs.

Additionally, Connecticut has made considerable state investment in its high-quality state preschool programs for three and four-year olds, now budgeted at \$11,821,921 million in State Fiscal Year 2017. The state has increased the number of state preschool program spaces five times since State Fiscal Year 2007. In the most recent expansion for FY 2015, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved, expanding state preschool programs by 1,020 spaces, bringing the current total of spaces to 14,904 (including those spaces that are used as wrap-around or extended day). Due to statewide budget deficits, it is unclear how spaces may be expanded moving forward. However, the governor's

office is committed to supporting quality early childhood and has limited rescissions wherever possible in order to maintain the state's existing high-quality preschool programs.

As mentioned previously, in 2016 the OEC officially launched the Early Care and Education component of the state's Early Childhood Information System (ECE-ECIS). The ECE-ECIS is a secure online data system that will allow the OEC to collect and monitor data to make informed program and policy decisions affecting young children birth to age five. All early childhood programs receiving public funds are required to participate in ECE-ECIS including PDG. ECIS will provide improved efficiencies and accountability for a coordinated and comprehensive system of early care and education and will help ensure that young children and their families have access to high-quality services for healthy development, learning and success.

Together, the above strategies, along with others detailed throughout this report, have helped Connecticut to increase the overall number and percentage of eligible children served in high-quality preschool programs funded by the grant.

1(b) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children served overall in the State Preschool Program. Please describe any increases or decreases in this GPRA measure based on fall enrollment in the State Preschool Program for the 2016-17 school year.

Connecticut has made a strong commitment to young children in the state for many years. The clearest testament of this commitment came with the creation of the OEC in 2013 by Executive Order, and put into statute in the 2014 legislative session with passage of Public Act 14-39. This cabinet-level agency has complete statutory and budgetary authority over state early childhood programs and services, including state preschool programs, child care subsidies from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), licensing and the majority of home visiting services as well as the PDG.

Several other legislative acts were passed in recent years to expand access to high-quality preschool including the following:

Public Act 14-39 - An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education.

Statutorily establishes the Office of Early Childhood.

- 1) Develop a quality improvement plan.
- 2) Create 1,020 additional School Readiness slots.
- 3) Develop a plan by January 1, 2015 to provide school readiness spaces for all eligible children.
- 4) Develop a plan by June 30, 2015 regarding the kindergarten age.
- 5) Begin a state longitudinal evaluation of the school readiness program. OEC will develop a kindergarten entry assessment tool.
- 6) Develop and implement an early childhood information system.
- 7) Develop by December 31, 2015 an accountability plan and by July 1, 2015 a report card.

8) Develop by March 1, 2015 a preschool survey.

9) Implement annual inspections of center- and home-based child care.

10) OEC is designated the lead agency for Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

Public Act 14-41 - An Act Establishing the Smart Start Program.

Requires the Office of Early Childhood to design and administer a competitive grant program to allow for public schools to create or expand preschool opportunities.

Public Act 14-47 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015.

1) Expansion of 1,020 School Readiness preschool slots in the Priority and Competitive School Districts and Alliance Districts.

2) Rate increase from \$8,346 to \$8,670 for full-day School Readiness programs.

3) 3% rate increase for state-funded Child Day Care Centers.

4) \$1.3 million in funding for quality enhancements and Accreditation Facilitation Project.

5) In addition to the existing 73 General Fund staff, a total of 40 new positions are added in the budget: 28 staff for licensing to allow for annual child care inspections and increase capacity to process background checks; 4 staff for a quality improvement system; 3 staff for the Smart Start Program; and 2 staff to improve internal capacity.

6) Carry-forward funding will support the following: creation of a statewide universal pre-k plan, local and regional planning grants; and start-up costs for additional preschool classrooms/slots.

Connecticut has made considerable state investment in its high-quality state preschool programs for three and four-year olds, now budgeted at \$11,821,921 million in state Fiscal Year 2017. The state has increased the number of state preschool program spaces five times since State Fiscal Year 2007. In the most recent expansion for FY 2015, the Governor proposed and the legislature approved, expanding state preschool programs by 1,020 spaces. That increase brought the Fiscal Year 2016 total preschool spaces to 14,852 (including those spaces that are used as wrap-around or extended day). In FY 17, a slight increase in spaces brought the total preschool spaces to 14,904. Connecticut's ability to increase state preschool spaces has been limited by the state budget; however, the governor's office remains committed to supporting quality early childhood and has limited rescissions wherever possible in order to maintain the state's existing high-quality preschool programs. According to the 2015 NIEER "State Preschool Yearbook", Connecticut ranked third in spending per child for state preschool programs.

The above commitments and investments have helped the OEC to secure the PDG to increase 430 high-quality preschool spaces and improve 282 existing preschool spaces for eligible four-year olds in year one. In year two, 18 additional PDG spaces were added, 9 expansion and 9 improved, bringing total expansion spaces to 439 and improved spaces to 291. This represents a 4.9% increase in the percentage of the state's capacity to serve eligible four-year olds in high-quality state preschool programs compared to all four-year-olds currently served, and a 3.5% increase compared to all three and four-year olds currently served in state preschool programs.

As mentioned in previous sections, the start of the second year of PDG in CT began on July 1, 2016, at which time PDG was moved into the newly established Quality Improvement (QI) Division of the OEC. The QI Division has since outlined a clear vision of early childhood quality improvement for the state, focusing on five pillars of quality: Health and Safety; Workforce Qualifications; Program Leadership; Family Engagement; and, Learning Environments.

The Health and Safety pillar will improve quality related to group size, child staff ratios, nutrition and

sanitation. Undoubtedly, existing licensing procedures and policies will inform the foundation of this pillar as well as evidence based practices to ensure the health and safety of children within early childhood settings.

The Workforce Qualifications pillar will improve quality via staff qualifications in early childhood settings with a focus on the education levels for positions within early care and education and core knowledge and competencies (CKCs) for staff working with young children. In October 2016, the OEC released its 'Core Knowledge and Competency Frameworks for Professionals Working with Young Children and their Families'. These CKCs represent a "shared core" across multiple early childhood roles and disciplines and outlines unique competencies for teachers. These CKCs will be reflected in the Workforce Qualifications pillar as well as Connecticut's future QRIS and serve as the foundation for workforce development in the state.

The Program Leadership pillar will focus on director/administrator/principal roles within early childhood settings as well as staff policies and program management. Currently, the PDG is specifically looking to inform parts of this pillar through the PDG Professional Learning Collaborative by way of supporting leadership and mentoring opportunities for PDG staff and programs that have excelled in one or more areas of leadership. Year 3 will see this more fully fleshed out, to begin in school year 2017-2018.

Since October of 2016, the QI division has conducted 12 listening sessions with approximately 300 members of the public to further inform CT's quality improvement work and that of the future QRIS. Feedback from these listening sessions, along with lessons learned from PDG implementation, as well as expertise from local and national partners will inform and advance Connecticut's quality improvement work.

The Family Engagement pillar will focus on improving quality by ensuring quality family engagement occurs in early childhood settings. This pillar will be heavily informed by the existing work of PDG, which has provided insight on deepening family engagement in its 13 communities. The pillar thus far has borrowed some of PDG's definitions of high-quality family engagement by focusing on engagement that is culturally responsive, takes a whole child approach, and involves the community.

The final pillar, Learning Environments, will focus on building out a ratings scale for the future QRIS, as well as improving quality by setting standards related to curriculum, NAEYC accreditation, Head Start standards and CT's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS).

The work of the QI division will undoubtedly have an effect on the number of children served in high-quality preschool throughout the state by improving the quality of existing state funded preschool programs through the development of a statewide QRIS. The initial timeline for the launch of the QRIS is currently 2020.

1(c) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children in the High-Need Communities served by the grant that are ready for kindergarten as determined by the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment or, if the State does not yet have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, other valid and reliable means of determining school readiness.

In the Year 2 APR, grantees will provide disaggregated data on the school readiness of the children served by the grant. This may include information collected about the children served by the grant at the end of their 2015-16 preschool year or in their 2016-17 kindergarten year. States may provide data from a sample of children (e.g., a sample being used for any evaluation).

In the Year 2 APR, grantees must describe their progress towards identifying the measures, methods, and data on the school readiness of children served by the Preschool Development Grant. In the narrative below provide the following information:

- The name of the assessment tool(s) and the Essential Domains of School Readiness measured;
- When the assessment tool(s) is/are given (e.g., in preschool and/or kindergarten);
- Whether the assessment is mandated by the State, and for which children;
- How long the State has been using the assessment tool(s);
- Whether the assessment tool(s) is/are implemented throughout the High-Need Community and/or Statewide;
- Whether the State provides or will provide training for local staff administering the assessment. If so, describe the requirements including processes to ensure continued reliability in the administration of the measure;
- If school readiness data is reported to the State, describe when and how data are reported.

Also, please describe, if applicable:

- The State's definition of "school readiness;"
 - Disaggregated information about children's school readiness on individual domains or subsets of the measure;
 - School readiness data for children disaggregated by subgroup (e.g., students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian, not Pacific Islander; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; White, not Hispanic; two or more races; with disabilities; English learners; and from any other subgroups the state determines appropriate; and
- How the State will continue to make progress in meeting this GPRA measure.

In 2013 Connecticut joined a multi-state consortium supported by federal funds, to develop a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), aligned to Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards, addressing all essential domains of school readiness. Information from this assessment system will inform communities and schools as they prioritize resources and plan improvement efforts in State Preschool Programs. The consortium is led by Maryland, who serves as fiduciary for the Enhanced Assessment Grant to support this work. The Consortium has been collaborating on the development of a joint KEA, based upon a prior version developed by two of the member states through their Race to The Top-Early Learning Challenge grants (Maryland and Ohio). This new KEA will be an improvement over Connecticut's current Kindergarten Entry Inventory due to the multiple means of administration, the use of technology and targeted professional development. This tool will provide information on each child's learning and development across the essential domains of school readiness (Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts and Physical Development).

The new KEA will be administered by trained teachers in the first eight weeks of school. While Connecticut's current Kindergarten Entry Inventory relies solely upon teacher's global ratings, the new instrument will use multiple methods of assessment, including selected-response items, performance tasks and observational rubrics that are consistent with nationally recognized technical standards, research and best practices to assess all children upon entry to Kindergarten.

In 2015, Connecticut implemented a pilot of the KEA in 37 schools across 18 school districts. The pilot involved 62 teachers and 264 students. Each teacher selected 5 students who represented a range of the students in their classroom. Overall the pilot findings support the design of the KEA. Feedback on the survey indicated support of the overall design and item level feedback indicated that in general the items were performing as intended.

The OEC is working in partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to coordinate implementation of the new KEA, which will be called a Revised Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI). The CSDE is working to integrate the data collected through the KEI into current data systems as well as condense and personalize the professional development created by the Consortium for Connecticut. The CSDE will be responsible to:

- Maintain administration of KEI data collection
- Include KEI data in the State Longitudinal Data System
- Provide technical assistance to school districts on KEI administration and any modifications
- Provide periodic recalibration and training on KEI administration

As the revised KEI is still being developed, CSDE has not yet determined with OEC how and when data will be reported. It is important to note that Connecticut's KEI will not be designed as a tool for teacher evaluation, program evaluation, or to determine an individual child's eligibility for kindergarten. Rather, data from the KEI will lead to better instruction and more informed decision-making which will lead to more effective strategies to reduce achievement gaps.

Connecticut does not have a definition of school readiness, but rather recognizes that early learning and growth is an ongoing process that begins before birth and is influenced by many factors. Often, attention is given to children's skills at transition points, such as kindergarten entry, however, no one set of skills at any given time can determine school readiness. The OEC encourages families, communities and schools to work together to support children's early learning and growth, each is on the right path to supporting children when:

- Families have the resources and knowledge to support their children's health and development - beginning before birth
- Communities support families, schools, early caregivers and children in a coordinated way
- Schools and early learning settings support all children, no matter their background or skill level
- Children are eager and ready to learn and grow

Originally, Connecticut planned to initiate a field test of the KEI in 2015, with census administration in 2016. Implementation was initially delayed to fall of 2017; however, census administration has been further delayed until fall 2018 in order to incorporate the creation of multiple forms into the development process for purposes of sustainability. In Connecticut, Section 4 of Public Act 14-39 and Section 51 of Public Act 115-244 require the OEC to develop, and the CSDE to implement, a kindergarten assessment. As the final forms will not be available until after the 2017 embedded field test, CSDE will use 2017-2018 as a planning year for the new assessment. It will work closely with

districts to streamline the training expectation and the test administration platform with an eye to increasing flexibility and reducing the implementation burden for Connecticut school districts. The shift in the timeline means that the OEC will not assess year 1 children in PDG classrooms for readiness upon entering Kindergarten.

As described in year 1, the OEC has partnered with the University of Connecticut (UCONN) Neag School of Education, who is conducting the third-party evaluation of PDG, to determine the best methods of student assessment until details of the revised KEI census implementation have been solidified. The UCONN research team has undertaken several steps and enacted several processes to collect student-level data and support the data collection and analysis efforts to determine kindergarten readiness of year 2 children and future PDG cohorts.

By October 2016, data from approximately 285 children across 37 PDG sites had been collected. The assessments were administered later than anticipated due to delays in approval by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at UCONN, which researchers believe impacted their ability to include even more students in the sample size, even though the target sample size was reached. Now that IRB approval has been completed, the OEC believes all future assessments will occur during September and May of each year. Data includes assessments of early literacy and numeracy from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) as well as the following subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson IV: word attack, applied problems, calculations, math facts fluency, letter-word identification, oral vocabulary, and picture vocabulary. In addition to academic measures, the UCONN research team is also collecting measures of social and emotional development as measured by the Behavior Assessment Scale for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2) and scored from teacher and parent reports of student data. To date, preliminary analyses of data has occurred but the UCONN research team is waiting for reports from the ECE-ECIS regarding student level demographics, as well as the post-assessments in May 2017.

The University of Connecticut is classified as a research intensive university with a strong national and international reputation. In particular, the Neag School of Education is ranked in the top 35 schools of education nationally and is known for having a strong research infrastructure and producing high-quality research. The individual members of the evaluation team are listed below.

Shaun M. Dougherty (PI) is an assistant professor of education policy and leadership with expertise in causal program evaluation and estimating the effects of educational interventions and policies with an eye towards improving equity in educational outcomes. His current work involves using state and large-district administrative longitudinal data sets to answer key education policy questions for policy makers and practitioners.

Bianca Montrosse-Moorhead (Co-PI) is an assistant professor of measurement, evaluation, and assessment with expertise in designing and carrying out comprehensive educational program evaluation.

Jennie Weiner (Co-PI) is an assistant professor of educational leadership. Her work focuses on issues of educational leadership and organizational change particularly in chronically underperforming schools and districts.

Tamika La Salle (Co-PI) is an assistant professor in school psychology with expertise in organizational climate and culture. Dr. La Salle also has extensive experience assessing children in school settings and is co-lead on child-level data collection.

Hannah Dostal (Co-PI) is an assistant professor in reading education and a certified reading specialist. Dr. Dostal also has extensive experience instructing and assessing children in school settings and is co-lead on child-level data collection.

For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:

1(d) GPRA Performance Measure: The number of States that collect and analyze data on State Preschool Program quality, including the structural elements of quality specified in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs.

N/A

Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

In this section of the APR, States will report on their progress addressing the Preschool Development Grant's selection criteria. The State should read the questions carefully and report in the narrative fields directly below the questions. Please include any data, data notes or formulas to help the readers understand the State's narrative responses.

1. Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria "C" of the application)

Describe the State's use of funds received over the grant period for State Preschool Program infrastructure and quality improvements, including the State's efforts to implement a system of monitoring and support at the State level toward activities such as those described in Section (C)(1)(a-k) of the NIA.

Note: States will report amounts and percentage of funds for State Preschool Program infrastructure and High-Quality Preschool Programs in the Competitive Preference Priority 3 Chart.

Connecticut plans to use no more than five percent of the funds received over the grant period for state preschool program quality infrastructure. It will use these funds in conjunction with existing state funds to build a statewide high-quality preschool infrastructure.

Since the OEC's initial application, no more than five percent of the funds received over the grant period have been used for state preschool program infrastructure. Funds for infrastructure have been used in the following ways and directly address activities (c), (d), (i), (f) and (j) described in Section (C)(1)(a-k) of the NIA:

- Employing a Data Accountability Project Manager
- Employing a Family Engagement Project Manager
- Enhancing the quality of child-teacher interactions through use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Conducting a third-party evaluation
- Introducing the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project
- Attending PDG meetings and Peer Exchanges to learn best practices and share information

In May of 2015, the OEC hired two full-time Project Manager positions --one for Data and Accountability, the other for Family Engagement. The Project Manager for Data and Accountability works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates all aspects of the PDG including monitoring, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. The position also meets regularly with grant managers of other state funding streams to coordinate data and reporting requirements when appropriate.

The OEC has also hired a full-time Family Engagement Project Manager to deepen local family engagement practices by working with subrecipients to design meaningful, culturally appropriate family engagement approaches and practices that meet their individual needs. This position also works with subrecipients to identify strategies and promising practices around outreach and recruitment of eligible children, issues of inclusion and serving children with disabilities and

supporting a seamless birth-to-third grade continuum.

Part of the 5% allowable funds for infrastructure has also been used to enhance the quality of child-teacher interactions through the use of the CLASS. The CLASS tool measures adult-child relationships in three domains and 10 dimensions to help teachers and classroom staff identify areas of strength and areas of improvement as they support children's learning. In year one, PDG funds were used to train observers in PDG communities in use of the CLASS instrument as well as to conduct CLASS observations. In year two the OEC has continued using the CLASS tool in PDG classrooms, but has made significant changes in how data is tracked, analyzed and shared for the purposes of program improvement. In year one, CLASS observation data was collected in hardcopy and analyzed by hand, which made the assessment of trends difficult, if not impossible.

Additionally, the OEC quickly realized that sharing CLASS observation data with coaches, who could use the data as part of teacher development and goal setting, was both cumbersome and not secure. It became obvious that something needed to be done to ensure data was collected in a more efficient and secure manner and shared in a timely fashion to ensure program improvement. *myTeachstone* was introduced in September 2016 as a way to solve some of the issues related to CLASS data sharing. *myTeachstone* is an online subscription service designed to combine CLASS observation data with individualized professional development resources and ease the sharing of CLASS data. CLASS observation data is shared online via *myTeachstone* with coaches assigned to PDG classrooms. This data is integrated into classroom staff's individualized professional learning goals, and coaches have been trained to understand how each CLASS domain and dimension aligns with each of the professional learning content areas outlined in Connecticut's original application: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social emotional development, Response to Intervention, Special Education Referral and Dual Language Learning.

To date, 51 CLASS observations have been completed using the online tool and information has been shared with coaches. A full analyses of CLASS data within and across the first and second year of PDG programming will not be available until June 2017. However, preliminary data reveals 84% of classrooms attained a high-range designation in the Classroom Support domain, while 16% fell into the medium-range. Additionally, 54% achieved a high-range designation in the Classroom Organization domain, while 46% were in the medium-range. Preliminary data also suggests that improvement can be made across classrooms in the Instructional Support domain, with 76% of classrooms designated in the medium-range, 20% in the low-range and 4% in the high-range. Within the Instructional Support domain, it appears most classrooms receive low-range designations in the Concept Development dimension, which relates to "how teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote student's higher-order thinking skills in contrast to a focus on rote instruction." With CLASS observation data, PDG coaches can better target goal setting with teachers and other classroom staff to bring awareness and a change of practice that will improve quality and show improvement in CLASS observation data over time.

It is important to note that the OEC is not coaching specifically to increase CLASS scores, but rather uses CLASS to explore the meaning of the actual dimensions as they relate to teacher practice. For example: In providing program support, coaches work within the Instructional Support domain of the CLASS tool to highlight each indicator and embed the structures of concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling into individual professional development plans and in relation to the priority area goal that was selected (Promoting social/emotional development, addressing special education, response to intervention, dual language learning, CT ELDS). This is done regardless of how high or low a CLASS score is within the Instructional Support domain.

As CLASS scores are not the focus on coaching, the OEC does not set targets in relation to CLASS scores nor does the state use the scores to monitor classrooms. Rather, they are used as just one piece of information available to coaches and teachers to improve their practice as it relates to one of the professional learning content areas outlined in the OEC's original application: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social emotional development, Response to Intervention and

Special Education Referral.

A portion of the allowable funds used for state preschool infrastructure was used to introduce the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP), a relational home visit model that “jump starts” relationships between families and teachers - home and school. National research shows that home visiting can dramatically improve the quality of preschool programs by deepening family engagement in a very tangible way. Funds have been used to train teachers and other program staff on PTHVP. Thus far, 200 home visits have been conducted using the PTHVP model, with positive anecdotal information from teachers, parents and even children. Satisfaction surveys are being designed to quantify the impact of the home visits on program staff and families and results will be available in the summer of 2017. The OEC will also use indicators from national research documenting the significant impact of PTHVP on child outcomes. Indicators include increased attendance, decreased behavior problems and increased parent participation in school activities.

Additionally, grants funds have allowed the OEC to partner with the University of Connecticut (UConn) Neag School of Education, to conduct the third-party evaluation and support the data collection and analysis efforts of the PDG, including student assessments on kindergarten readiness.

Funds have also been used to allow OEC staff, subrecipients and others to attend PDG related meetings and peer exchanges. The OEC has taken full advantage of the technical assistance provided by entities that has helped ensure best practices, information and lessons learned are shared with other states to improve and ensure quality within the PDG program.

It is important to note that all other structural elements are currently in place within Connecticut's high-quality preschool programs; however PDG funds are not being used to directly affect or implement those structural elements. As an example, the OEC is currently developing its QRIS which will include the development of a statewide professional development program for early childhood professionals. This Quality Improvement System will incorporate recently approved Core Knowledge and Competency (CKC) standards for early childhood professionals to complement the existing CKCs for teachers. Additionally, the OEC has increased the frequency of licensing inspections (occurring every 10-12 months) and funding to improve early childhood facilities. In year two the OEC officially launched the Early Care and Education component of the state's Early Childhood Information System (ECE-ECIS). While no PDG funds have been used to build or implement ECE-ECIS, its launch signals a huge win for ensuring quality within PDG and other state funded programs. The ECE-ECIS is a secure online data system that will allow the OEC to collect and monitor data to make informed program and policy decisions affecting young children birth to age five. All early childhood programs receiving public funds are required to participate in ECE-ECIS including PDG. ECE-ECIS will help ensure that young children and their families have access to high-quality services for healthy development, learning and success. ECE-ECIS will provide improved efficiencies and accountability for a coordinated and comprehensive system of early care and education.

2. Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community (Selection Criteria D of application)

Describe the progress the State has made during the reporting year to implement and sustain voluntary high quality preschool programs for eligible children in two or more High-Need Communities (Selection Criteria D(4) of the application) that include **ALL** structural elements listed below that are included in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

- High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;
- High-quality professional development for all staff;
- A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications;
- A Full-Day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- Evidence-based health and safety standards.

Please describe the progress the State has made in establishing High-Quality Preschool Programs that include ALL structural elements listed above that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality.

Connecticut's ambitious and achievable plan, funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant, was built on the OEC existing state preschool infrastructure. PDG has allowed Connecticut to expand access to high-quality state preschool programs and improve the quality of existing State Preschool Programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 712 eligible preschoolers in year one, and 730 in year two. In Year one, 430 of the total 712 total spaces were committed to expanding new preschool program spaces that met the definition of high-quality as defined by the grant. In year two, that number slightly increased to 439.

According to recent data compiled via PDG Interim Reports, 35 of 37 PDG early learning providers reported that all structural elements of high-quality defined in the grant were fully-operational in every PDG classroom within their site. Two programs reported that one high-quality structural element was still being refined and/or not in every PDG classroom, one being evidence-based health and safety standards; the other was inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and participation in all opportunities. With regard to evidence-based health and safety standards, every PDG program is either licensed, NAEYC accredited/Head Start approved and/or implements ECERS assessments. Further conversation is needed to understand specifically why the program reported that the structural element was not in place; these conversations will occur and any issues will be resolved by March 2017. As for the remaining program reporting not implementing the structural element related to inclusion, follow up revealed that the program was still working with the public school system to break down the barriers to having services outlined on a child's IEP provided on-site. The program reported an expected implementation date of 9/1/17.

All PDG classrooms, including those with expansion spaces, are meeting several of the high-quality structural elements defined in the grant including the state-funded mandate of a class size of no more than 18, as well as a child-to-staff ratio of no more than 9:1. Additionally, all PDG funded classrooms are in either school-day, school year programs (6-hour days), or full-day, full-year programs (10-hour days).

All programs reported compensating instructional staff with salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff. In October 2016 however, the OEC issued four Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) related to issues of noncompliance with regard to high-staff qualifications. After review of data in the Early Childhood Professional Registry, six classrooms had not designated a Qualified Staff Member (QSM) in a PDG classroom or, the designated QSM did not meet the PDG requirements for high staff qualifications. CAPs were issued and all issues were quickly resolved. In one instance, the QSM did not have a bachelor's degree and was replaced by another teacher in the program that met the qualification requirements. In five other instances, teachers had a bachelor's degree, but not in early childhood and needed to provide documentation to formally attain their Early Childhood Teaching Credential (ECTC), the state approved alternate pathway. In these instances, their CAPs identified the timeline by which documentation would be submitted to the state's Early Childhood Professional Registry for review and approval of their ECTC.

Each PDG program and classroom also participates in evidence-based health and safety standards as measured by either OEC's licensing division, NAEYC accreditation and/or ECERS assessments. Every PDG funded early learning provider must be NAEYC accredited, or attain accreditation within three years of being funded. While on the path to accreditation, every program must have an ECERS rating

within the classroom at least once per year in order to remain compliant. 25 of 37 PDG funded programs are NAEYC accredited or Head Start approved --of the 12 not accredited, 10 are programs with expansion spaces. These 12 programs have received an ECERS rating as an interim measure of quality. Results are monitored by both the OEC and local School Readiness Liaisons, and Performance Improvement Plans are implemented when appropriate.

Each PDG program site has reported that on-site comprehensive services have been implemented and are accessible to all eligible children and their families. As an example, 54% of programs reported that children are screened within 45-days of program enrollment. 14% reported screening children within 30 days and another 14% reported screening within 60 days. The remaining 18% reported screening more than once, regularly and periodically. Additionally, 4% of programs reported using only one screening tool, while the remaining 96% used two or more screening tools including the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), Brigance, Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment Program (DECA) and others. In many cases, PDG funds introduced for the first time, or enhanced the frequency of these screenings within PDG classrooms in year one and have continued to use them in year two.

Another comprehensive service common across PDG programs is their participation in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide nutritious meals and snacks for children. Many programs also reported that PDG funds have allowed them to introduce or enhance this structural element by increasing a nutritionist position as well as launching various food and physical fitness activities for children and families in year one, which have continued into year two. Many programs, too, have been able to hire additional case managers, social workers or family engagement outreach workers to provide referrals and linkages to families as well as coordinate onsite services such as SNAP.

A key comprehensive service delivered in each PDG classroom is high-quality professional development that focuses on four key areas: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social Emotional Development, Response to Intervention and Special Education Referral. This high-quality professional development, along with assessment of all PDG classrooms using CLASS ensures that developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments are present and aligned with the Connecticut ELDS. The high-quality professional learning model was designed specifically for the PDG and is delivered and evaluated based on adult learning theories and current research and practices. It tests a unique professional learning delivery model, supported by best practices and peer-reviewed literature on teacher effectiveness, that includes highly individualized coaching and consultation as the primary medium to influence knowledge, understanding and practices within a classroom as opposed to the 'cookie-cutter' large group trainings which are more commonly utilized. The design, delivery, and assessment of the high-quality professional learning are rooted in core competencies and delivered by approved facilitators and coaches that hold the competencies needed to address learning needs.

Also available at the program level are enhanced opportunities to engage families. PDG teachers and directors in all 13 communities are involved in Subgrantee Family Engagement Teams that are convened on a quarterly basis to reflect on their practices, review promising strategies and frameworks, and develop their own plans for deepening family engagement locally.

As described previously, these teams have identified the Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships as the compass to guide their work in employing meaningful, culturally appropriate strategies to deepen their family engagement efforts. The Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement Toolkit describes the "roadmap" process for developing community-specific family engagement plans. The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) provides the relational home visit that "jump starts" the all-important relationships fundamental to high-quality high-impact family

engagement. The Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality Measures (FPTRQ) assesses the progress of community teams. The work has begun where communities are, identifies where they want to be, and determines how they want to get there.

Prior to PDG, only 18% of programs in PDG's 13 communities used an evidenced-based family engagement framework to inform their ongoing family engagement efforts. Use of the Dual Capacity Building Framework provides the opportunity for PDG programs to deepen their family engagement efforts by ensuring they are relational, build the capacity of both teachers *and* families to serve as co-educators of teachers, and are linked to learning.

Prior to PDG, only 29% of PDG programs offered home visiting to families. Now all 13 communities and 68% of PDG programs offer the PTHVP model of home visiting. The PTHVP model of home visiting stipulates that home visiting be voluntary for both program staff and families. As PTHVP continues within PDG for the remainder of year two and throughout years 3 and 4 of the grant, it is likely that more and more families and program staff will be inspired to “opt in” to do home visits.

PTHVP's relational home visit can be transformative for families and staff, given staff visits families in their homes with no agenda other than to hear from families about their hopes and dreams for their children. This home visiting opportunity provides programs like Head Start and Family Resource Centers that already do home visits, an additional tool in their home visiting toolbox - a tool that can successfully launch the all-important relationship between families and teachers, home and school and support the success of home visiting in general.

As indicated in the executive summary of this document, moving forward the OEC will collect data on the indicators used in the national research on the effectiveness of PTHVP, i.e., good attendance, fewer challenging behaviors, and increased family engagement. Plans for uniform data collection across all 13 communities will be developed in the coming months and the data collected and reported in years 3 and 4.

In the interim report that informed this APR, programs were asked for their assessment (based on individualized data collection methods) of the effectiveness of PTHVP utilizing the above-specified indicators. While we acknowledge that data collection methods are not uniform, the communities responded as follows. Fifty-eight percent of programs responded that, to-date (after one relational home visit), children whose families participated in PDG's PTHVP home visits have better average daily attendance than those whose families did not participate. Thirty-two percent of programs responded that, to-date (after one relational home visit), children whose families participated in PDG's PTHVP home visits have fewer referrals for challenging behaviors and fewer classroom interventions for challenging behaviors than children whose families did not participate. Fifty-three percent of programs responded that, to-date (after one relational home visit), families who participated in PTHVP home visits participate more in family engagement activities than families who did not participate.

Other than NAEYC surveys used during the accreditation and re-accreditation process, none of PDG's 13 communities specifically assessed their family engagement efforts. The use of FPTRQ provides new data on the development and maintenance of high quality relationships among families and program staff.

The work of the 13 PDG communities reflects a set of unifying characteristics that tend to be present in most programs with high quality, high impact family engagement. In the interim report that informs this APR, data was collected on the presence of these characteristics in programs in each community.

Ninety-six percent report consistent use of reciprocal communication in their interactions with families; 86% report ongoing exchange of knowledge; 82% report parents are highly visible in their classrooms; 82% report parents serve as decision-makers regarding their children's learning; 71% report parents serve in leadership roles in their programs; 54% report providing opportunities for their parents to support and learn from each other in parent led activities; 93% report successfully engaging families in supporting their children's learning at home and in the community; 82% report linking parents to resources in their communities. These statistics will inform ongoing family engagement activities, specifically on the selection of promising strategies to be reviewed during future quarterly meetings.

Lastly, as mentioned previously in this APR, while all programs reported meeting the structural element of inclusion of children with disabilities, throughout our PDG communities more work must be done in order to provide the necessary special education and related services in all PDG settings. To ensure this high-quality standard is met with rigor, in year two the OEC continues to work with school districts to deliver special education and related services integrated into the normal routines and activities of PDG classrooms. In most cases, community school districts are receptive to this priority; however, as noted in other sections of this report, in some communities it remains a challenge.

Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

Describe the number and percent of Eligible Children served and the cost per slot.

As described in Connecticut's application, per-child costs were determined for two main space types:

- Six-hour, school-day, school-year spaces
- Ten-hour, full-day, year-round spaces

Both spaces were calculated as a percentage increase to existing state preschool program rates. Rates for both expansion and improved spaces is approximately 2.1 times the state preschool program rates to support the high-quality elements described in the grant. All costs are based on the state-funded teacher-child ratio of 9:1, with no more than 18 children per classroom.

In order to build a per child rate, the OEC first determined what elements were needed to promote a high-quality preschool classroom. These elements included staff, administration and oversight, comprehensive services, professional development, transportation and physical space.

Staff costs include head teachers as well as assistant teachers, floaters and even substitutes. Salary calculations were based on data and reports provided by the Connecticut Department of Education, the OEC, the Department of Labor and directly reported by subrecipients. Teacher salaries were calculated using local public school K-12 Teacher data. The average salary included for public school teachers was \$52,419, per salary ranges reported by the Subgrantees in their school districts. According to the State Department of Education's report "2012-13 Average Teacher Salary for New Teachers Working Full-time, by Degree Level - Bachelor's," starting salaries for new teachers ranged from \$40,883 to 46,483, with a statewide average of \$44,743.

Benefits were calculated at 28% which, after research and discussion with subrecipients, was typical of communities included in the grant. All program administration costs were budgeted low to minimize local administration costs as stipulated in Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the NIA.

Comprehensive service cost estimates included additional staff and consultants at percentages ranging from 5% to 20% of full-time equivalents (FTE) for PDG classrooms. Comprehensive service costs also included those costs stipulated by providers such as the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), to provide early childhood mental health consultation to each PDG classroom. Also included in the cost per child rate were education consultants, health consultants, social workers, family outreach workers, coordinator/assessment staff and nutritionists.

The following expenses were calculated for 10-hour, full-day/full-year costs, all calculations include 28% benefits:

Teacher: 100% FTE at \$67,109
Assistant Teacher: 138% FTE at \$50,600
Floater: 138% FTE at \$36,520
Administration, Fiscal & Audit: 8% FTE at \$8,995
Clerical & Data Collection: 20% FTE at \$12,811
Coordinator/evaluator/monitor: 20% FTE at \$16,640
Education Specialist: 15% FTE at \$16,320
Health/Mental Health/ECCP: 5% FTE and 18% FTE at \$19,136
Social Services/Family Coordinator: 20% FTE at \$10,301
Outreach Worker/Parent Activities: 20% FTE at \$7,168
Nutritionist: 8% FTE at \$7,488
Meals & Snacks: 100% at \$27,855
Classroom Instruction & Assessment: 100% FTE at \$6,750
Professional Development: 100% FTE at \$3,750
Substitutes: 100% FTE at \$2,625
Transportation: 100% FTE at \$1,350
Travel: 100% FTE at \$660
Rent: 100% FTE at \$22,680
Utilities: 100% FTE at \$2,400
Custodian/Security: 8% FTE at \$2,688
Playground Space: 100% FTE at \$4,536
Cost per classroom: \$328,370
Cost per child: \$18,243
Rate per child: \$18,200

The following expenses were calculated for 6-hour, school-day/school-year costs, all calculations include 28% benefits:

Teacher: 100% FTE at \$67,096
Assistant Teacher: 138% FTE at \$36,800
Floater : 138% FTE at \$18,592
Administration, Fiscal & Audit: 8% FTE at \$5,996
Clerical & Data Collection: 20% FTE at \$9,609
Coordinator/evaluator/monitor: 20% FTE at \$12,480
Education Specialist: 15% FTE at \$8,704
Health/Mental Health/ECCP: 5% FTE and 18% FTE at \$19,136
Social Services/Family Coordinator: 20% FTE at \$10,301
Outreach Worker/Parent Activities: 20% FTE at \$7,168
Nutritionist: 8% FTE at \$4,992
Meals & Snacks: 100% FTE at \$17,552
Classroom Instruction & Assessment: 100% FTE at \$6,750
Professional Development: 100% FTE at \$3,000

Substitutes: 100% FTE at \$2,100
Transportation: 100% FTE at \$1,350
Travel: 100% FTE at \$660
Rent: 100% FTE at \$18,900
Utilities: 100% FTE at \$2,000
Custodian/Security: 8% FTE at \$4,480
Playground Space: 100% FTE at \$3,780

Cost per classroom: \$261,446

Cost per child: \$14,425*

Rate per child: \$12,800

***School-year rates were reduced by the anticipated in-kind contribution in school district locations of \$1,725 per space supporting line items such as rent, utilities, playground space and custodial and security.**

In addition to the per space rate, Connecticut proposed in its application to significantly increase the opportunity to improve outcomes for children by providing individualized training, professional development and coaching as described earlier in this APR. These rates were calculated in partnership with EASTCONN and totaled \$5,000 per classroom and \$8,000 per community.

Start-up funds for expansion classrooms were also included in the per child cost at a rate of \$25,000 per expansion classroom in year one only. Local infrastructure support in the form of increasing the hours of local School Readiness Liaisons was also included and differed based on the current salaries and increased hours of each Liaison position --on average the position was increased 17 hours per week.

After all expenses were calculated, target costs per child included:

- Expansion, 6-hour day, school-year: \$12,800
- Expansion, 10-hour day, year-round: \$18,200
- Improved, part-day to 6-hour-day, school-year: \$8,300
- Improved, existing 6-hour-day, school-year: \$6,800
- Improved, existing 10-hour-day, year-round: \$9,530

Total average costs per space type:

- Expansion Average Rate per Space: \$16,194
- Improved Average Rate per Space: \$9,710

Since its originally proposed application, target rates have not changed from year one to year 2 and no substantive changes are planned for years three and four.

3. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships (Selection Criteria E of the application)

Describe the extent to which the State has collaborated with each Subgrantee to ensure that each Subgrantee is effectively implementing High-Quality Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the application) and how the State ensures strong partnerships between each Subgrantee and LEAs or other Early Learning Providers, as appropriate.

The OEC has implemented several strategies to ensure collaboration with each subrecipient in order to effectively implement the PDG. Key strategies include:

- Two dedicated staff to manage relationships specific to the PDG
- Regular meetings every other month with all subrecipients to review PDG implementation, successes and challenges
- Regular phone calls with subrecipients to check-in on individual progress
- An 'open-door' policy in which subrecipients can contact OEC staff at any time to share successes or concerns related to the PDG
- Quarterly family engagement meetings
- MOUs which outline the roles and responsibilities of both subrecipients and the OEC
- Monitoring protocols to ensure accountability of both subrecipients as well as the OEC

Collaboration and partnership between the OEC and subrecipients is founded on the existing School Readiness Council infrastructure set forth by the state both in statute and in written policies and guidance. Specifically for the PDG, the OEC has built on this infrastructure and created MOUs that specify the roles, responsibilities, goals and objectives of the PDG. The MOU and existing guidance and policies include items and assurances for both the state and subrecipients. When a grant of this scale is implemented, MOUs are critical resources to ensure stronger collaboration so that each entity is aware of, and held accountable for, their role in successful implementation.

Professional program staff within the OEC have a long-standing history of working collaboratively with the School Readiness Councils that serve as PDG subrecipients. The OEC and School Readiness Councils, as well as early learning providers, have a solid and proven track record of working together to provide high-quality services that meet the needs of our youngest learners. This long-term relationship and history of providing quality preschool spaces in Connecticut was invaluable to supporting the planning, development and implementation of the PDG in years 1 and 2.

As mentioned earlier, the OEC has hired two staff positions specifically to manage the day-to-day activities of the PDG. The Data and Accountability Project Manager works solely on issues related to the PDG and coordinates monitoring, payments, supervision, data collection, accountability and federal reporting. To ensure strong partnership, this position meets with subrecipients regularly to discuss local monitoring efforts as well as to receive input and guidance on documents created by the OEC to monitor compliance with the PDG.

The Project Manager for Family Engagement collaborates with program providers, school readiness liaisons, and families in implementation of PDG's family engagement quarterly meeting process. Together these stakeholders review promising strategies and frameworks and develop community plans to deepen family engagement. Roadmaps (plans) for community-specific efforts are developed, implemented, and modified as needed during quarterly meetings in all 13 PDG communities.

In addition to the collaborations and partnerships inherent in the quarterly meeting process, collaboration is required in achieving various other grant-related initiatives.

Online Toolkit for Kindergarten Transition

The original grant application calls for the development of an online toolkit for kindergarten transition. The State Department of Education is collaborating with the Office of Early Childhood in the development of the toolkit. As the work proceeds, the assistance of additional staff and perhaps additional state partners may be required.

PTHVP

In addition to PDG, several Connecticut districts, state agencies, and other stakeholders have been training staff for implementation of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project model (PTHVP). The State Department of Education in collaboration with Capital Region Education Council (CREC) has trained 3 cohorts of PTHVP home visitors. The Middletown School District is utilizing the model in one of its elementary schools to decrease student chronic absenteeism and decrease the achievement gap. The University of Connecticut's CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative is also using the PTHVP model to increase family and community engagement in schools in Bridgeport, Meriden, East Hartford, and Waterbury.

Given this substantial interest in PTHVP in Connecticut, the state is considering joining the network of grassroots organizations in the country who are successfully using relational home visits to support children's education. CA, CO, MA, and MN are home to PTHVP hubs designed to provide training and technical assistance relative to PTHVP. Connecticut is currently exploring the possibility of becoming the fifth HUB - extending its family engagement collaboration to the national level.

Birth-Third Grade Continuum

The grant also directs the OEC to support PDG communities in strengthening a seamless birth-third grade continuum. This work will require expansion of the PDG family engagement community teams to include birth-third grade stakeholders who will be recruited during the summer of 2017 and join the PDG family engagement quarterly meeting process in the fall of 2017.

A State Department of Education representative, an education consultant from the Office of Early Childhood, the project manager for family engagement, and three fellows from the second cohort of the University of Connecticut Pre-K-3 Leadership Group are already collaborating through the PDG Birth-Third Grade Advisory Group. The group will be meeting quarterly through the remainder of PDG year 2 and years 3 and 4 to oversee and support efforts to strengthen the continuum particularly at the systems level.

Additional Collaboration with One PDG Community

One of the PDG communities, who has received significant funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to support a major family engagement effort, has established an office for community school partnerships with whom PDG is collaborating. PDG's family engagement project manager will be visiting 20 preschool programs to share resources from the district for families that will initiate their engagement with the district. This effort will provide the opportunity for PDG to access families who can provide feedback relative to both the online toolkit for kindergarten transition as well as efforts to strengthen the birth-third grade continuum.

Together, these two positions have been critical in building on existing relationships with subrecipients and both have 'open door' policies which allow subrecipients to freely discuss their successes, challenges and concerns regarding the PDG. This open door policy has been critical to building mutually respectful and trusting relationships where together, the OEC and subrecipients can address issues in real-time and overcome any barriers to high-quality implementation.

The PDG has augmented program monitoring, accountability and evaluation of each preschool program by expanding the capacity and breadth of the School Readiness Liaison positions - positions that serve as the central point of contact between subrecipients and the OEC. Enhancement of the Liaison positions results in a greater focus on collaboration to ensure program quality and accountability, monitoring and support, standards implementation, program evaluation and finances. Together with the Project Managers, Liaisons monitor local progress towards goals outlined in the

grant.

The OEC and its partners believe strong collaboration is key to successful implementation of the PDG and will continue to strengthen efforts that exemplify quality and partnership to better serve children and families.

4. Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum (Section F of the application)

Describe progress the State has made for alignment within a birth through third grade continuum in activities for birth through age five programs ((F)(1)(a-b) in the NIA) and kindergarten through third grade ((F)(2)(a-d) in the NIA).

The OEC is committed to developing a seamless birth-to-third-grade continuum - a continuum that will ensure smooth transitions for children and families *through* the continuum and alignment of values and practices *across* the continuum. PDG's robust family engagement efforts will strengthen the birth to third grade continuum across PDG communities.

Thirteen community teams have been developed to include providers/teachers, directors/principals, and families. Families and teachers are absolutely essential to any effort to deepen family engagement and should participate as equal partners in the process. The teams are meant to be inclusive, however, of anyone within the school or program who interacts with children and families on a daily basis. In addition, other community stake-holders outside PDG sites are welcome and will be invited to participate as well. During year two, PDG families will be fully integrated into the process, and at the end of year two (June 2017), the teams will be expanded to include additional families and other stakeholders in the birth-third grade continuum,

The PDG family engagement quarterly meetings have created a context in which the community teams reflect on their practices, review promising strategies and frameworks, and develop their own plans for deepening family engagement locally. In year 3, the expanded teams will consider gaps in the birth-third grade continuum in their communities and determine how they can address those gaps in years 3 and 4.

As indicated above, PDG community teams will be expanded to include stakeholders from the birth-third grade continuum. Planning and recruiting for this expansion will begin at the end of year two and, in addition to our current team members, may include:

- Birth to Three
- Head Start
- NFN, MIECHV, and PAT administrators and providers
- Help Me Grow Community Liaisons
- Child Development Infoline
- United Way
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Family Resource Centers
- kindergarten and first-third grade teachers

- families of children birth-eight
- others identified by community teams

The grant calls for a needs assessment process to identify gaps in the continuum that need to be filled. While all 13 communities are addressing the continuum in a multitude of ways, gaps do still need to be addressed at the community level.

That being said, most of PDG's participating communities have been involved as Discovery Communities in the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Foundation efforts to optimize early childhood education by involving stakeholders at the community level. As part of this movement, needs assessments have been developed and conducted. Consequently, prior to initiating any new needs assessment, existing research relative to the continuum needs to be identified and a determination made regarding what new information or what more current information needs to be gathered on a community level.

PDG's expanded family engagement community teams can take on this task. Subsequent to identifying current needs, PDG's community teams will consider in what ways they could support the continuum by smoothing transitions for children and families through the continuum and aligning values and practices across the continuum. Action steps developed subsequent to this process could then be integrated into community Roadmaps.

Additionally, PDG's community teams need to explore/negotiate opportunities for sustainability of PDG's community approach to family engagement. Could the teams be absorbed as committees by existing bodies like School Readiness Councils, the PTAs/PTOs, Family Resource Centers, the United Way, etc.? Could school districts commit to creating teams of family members, preschool teachers, kindergarten-third grade teachers, principals, preschool directors, preschool teachers/providers, and other community stakeholders to participate in Connecticut's Friday Café meetings? Other opportunities could be identified and explored by the community teams to sustain community-driven family engagement and birth-third grade continuum efforts.

Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) relational home visits were conducted in the fall of year two. Informational home visits will be conducted in the spring of year two. Given PDG's direction to support development of a seamless birth-third grade continuum, the content of the informational home visits will be transition to kindergarten. This focus for the informational visits will continue in years three and four as well. To support communities in preparing for these home visits *and* transition to kindergarten, the September 2016 quarterly meetings provided opportunity to review two promising strategies relative to transition to kindergarten - The Building Bridges Interactive Case and Ready4K!

The Bridging Worlds Interactive Case developed by the Harvard Family Research Project looks at a little girl's experience transitioning to kindergarten from five perspectives, hers, her mother's, her preschool teacher's, her kindergarten teacher's, and her preschool program education director's. The interactive case can be used individually or in a group, online or face-to-face. In our quarterly meetings, different team members took on different roles reading from the scripts provided and then discussing questions provided in the case. The discussions were enthusiastic and enlightening. The case provided the opportunity for families and teachers, involved in their own children's and student's transitions, to discuss the very relevant issues but to discuss them detached from the emotions that would have arisen if they had been speaking from their own personal experience.

Ready4K! is a texting program designed for families of children in pre-kindergarten. Families who

participate receive three texts per week for the school year that show families how to use their regular routines and activities to support their children's kindergarten readiness. The program was developed and researched by Stanford University and is currently being distributed to families free of charge by a national parent group. Several PDG communities are promoting Ready4K! to their families. They quickly recognized the potential of this program to reach all families, utilizing a preferred mode of communication. Ready4K! also provides a way for families whose schedules make visits to school rare, a way to engage as co-educators of their children on their own time accommodating their specific schedules.

At the beginning of year two, the PDG Birth-Third Grade Advisory Group was established. Participants include:

- OEC Education Consultant
- SDE Education Consultant
- three fellows from the first cohort of the University of Connecticut Birth-Third Grade Leadership Team
- PDG's Project Manager for Family & Community Engagement

The Advisory Group will continue to meet quarterly for the remainder of the grant. They are currently considering supporting development of a cadre of elementary principals who will champion intentional play and developmentally appropriate practices in kindergarten and/or a community of practice for stakeholders of the birth-third grade continuum. They will also consider supporting a system's approach to support of the continuum.

The grant directed that PDG enhance the birth-third grade continuum by collaborating with the State Department of Education to design an online toolkit for transition to kindergarten. While the toolkit could encompass a wide range of resources for preschool and kindergarten teachers, preschools and elementary schools, administrators in districts, and a design for smooth transition via a systems approach, the work thus far has been limited to resources for families. There is already a wealth of online resources available including toolkits developed by organizations and states. So we will offer families the best of what is out there. Our family engagement community teams of families, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders will serve as focus group participants and support formative and summative evaluation efforts.

Given PDG's emphasis on reaching families who are particularly challenged by life circumstances and/or have a general resistance to institutions and social services, the design effort to-date has been to create a simple web site or web page that would be accessible, intuitive, and user-friendly. Families will view a visually interesting and colorful menu of resources they can access with one click and print with another. Content would be direct and simple, featuring tips, checklists, books, and action steps. The web site/web page will be titled, "Hello Kindergarten!" Prospective topics include:

- Getting Ready
- Healthy Me
- Time to Visit
- Here I Come - the Big Day!
- Taking Care of My Special Needs
- Questions My Mommy & Daddy Have

• Read & Click (Resources & Links)

Professional development for teachers will be designed to support use of the toolkit.

OEC is committed to supporting the 13 PDG communities in strengthening the birth-third grade continuum by:

- maintaining a robust family engagement effort
- implementing PTHVP informational home visits to support kindergarten transition
- developing an online toolkit for kindergarten transition
- expanding the family engagement community teams to identify and address gaps within the continuum that PDG resources can address
- facilitating the work of the PDG Birth-Third Grade Continuum Advisory Group to oversee and support this work

Section A: Part C - Competitive Preference Priorities

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe the progress the State has made on its credible plan for obtaining and using non-Federal matching funds to support the implementation of its ambitious and achievable plan during the grant period. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period. Please describe any changes made to the data reported in **Table 7(a)**; explain if your *Year 2 Target* differs from the *Year 2 Actual*.

In year two, as of December 1, 2016, match funds totaled \$2,746,473. This match is achieved through support of the state's early care and education infrastructure including additional licensing staff hired for the OEC's Child Care and Licensing Division and support of the implementation of ECE-ECIS. Additionally, in order to promote integration of eligible children in economically diverse and inclusive settings, the OEC has also contributed state quality enhancement funds to support non-eligible children in PDG classrooms due to age or income ineligibility. Also included in the state's match was support provided to existing state preschool spaces improved by PDG.

In year one, match funds totaled \$4,654,582 --14% less than initially anticipated when budgets were created in 2015. Some of the difference stems from how the OEC anticipated reporting match funds and how it will report moving forward after realizing some elements would be harder to track and/or unreliable over time. The OEC had anticipated including the match the state-funded share for non-eligible children who are in PDG classrooms however, as changes in enrollment have and continue to occur throughout the program year, this total becomes harder to track and document consistently. That said, the OEC has decided that it will not count these state-funds towards the match component and will still meet the competitive preference requirement as the amount is less than \$1 million in year 1. It is important to note however, that these dollars are still being infused into PDG classrooms to improve quality and provide spaces for non-eligible children.

Additionally, \$110,559 is from less state quality enhancement funds as the result of two subrecipients notifying the OEC of changes within improved classrooms that resulted in 34 less non-eligible children being served in PDG classrooms. Additionally, because 34 non-eligible children were no longer served in those classrooms, just over \$200,000 in the state-funded share of those spaces was also removed from the match figure.

During year one of the PDG, eight licensing staff were hired for the OEC Child Care and Licensing Division. These licensing staff help to ensure more regular visits to inspect the health and safety standards of PDG and other state preschool classrooms. These positions are part of the state match and were hired at an annual average salary of \$63,000 plus benefits. In year one, \$967,650 was expended on these positions, slightly less than anticipated once interviews were conducted and staff salaries had been negotiated. In year two, as of December 31, 2016 \$446,400 was spent on supporting these positions and counts towards the state match.

The ECE-ECIS also supports the infrastructure for high-quality early care and education. State funding for ECE-ECIS in year 1 totaled \$1,240,451, higher than the estimated \$1,025,000 in year one. This was due to the added time spent on building out the system as well as fixing technical glitches that delayed its launch. In year 2, as of December 31, 2016, \$804,024 had been contributed towards the OEC's match.

Additional matching funds include state supported preschool spaces that are being improved through

PDG. \$1,990,070 was committed to serve 282 children in existing state preschool spaces in year one, this target was met as all spaces were utilized.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting the Continuum of Early Learning and Development (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in creating a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade, such as high-quality infant and toddler care, home visitation, full-day kindergarten, and before and after care services for, at a minimum, a defined cohort of eligible children and their families within each high need community served by each Subgrantee. For progress *not* made in these areas, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

The OEC is committed to developing a seamless progression of supports and initiatives from birth-third grade. To do this, the OEC will build upon existing collaborative efforts with the State Department of Education, local school districts, school readiness councils, early care and education providers, families and other community program partners. In its application, the OEC outlined eight key outcomes to measure the progress of developing and supporting this continuum:

1. Report annual data on children in subrecipient communities as they progress through the continuum of services from birth through third grade
2. Increase the percentage of children remaining in MIECHV-funded or state-funded home visiting programs until the age of three.
3. Increase the percentage of children in subrecipient communities who exit Early Head Start at age three and enter a high-quality preschool program.
4. Increase the percentage of children exiting from home visiting programs at age three and enrolling in high-quality state preschool programs.
5. Increase the percentage of children exiting from Birth to Three programs at age three in subrecipient communities who enroll in high-quality state preschool programs.
6. Increase parent and provider satisfaction regarding the identification and referral process for children with disabilities.
7. Support the Pre-K to Grade 3 Leadership Program to ensure participants are able to demonstrate an understanding of the special considerations for curriculum, instruction and assessment for children pre-K to Grade 3 as measured by pre and post-assessments.

Additionally, the Family Support Division of the OEC will begin to work with MIECHV-funded and state-funded home-visiting contractors that use Parents as Teachers, Nurturing Families Network, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Early Head Start evidence-based models, to retain children until preschool age (when appropriate) in order to better inform hard-to-reach or isolated parents about high-quality preschool options available to them. The OEC recognizes that home visitors establish long-term relationships with families in the three years preceding preschool enrollment, and would be in a good position to inform the families on their caseloads about the value and impact of high-quality preschool experiences.

The application also stipulated that the OEC will collaborate with all Early Head Start programs serving the 13 subrecipients' communities to ensure that parents of enrolled children are well informed about high-quality preschool options available through state preschool programs and Head Start.

Additionally, through the work of the PDG family engagement community teams, outreach can occur in partnership with home-visiting program contractors to assist parents of children in the 13 PDG

communities to visit state preschool programs or Head Start as their children approach age three.

As previously mentioned, the OEC is committed to collaborating with school districts in the 13 participating communities to deliver special education and related services to the PDG classroom - services to be integrated into the normal routines and activities of the classroom. Clearly, successful collaboration relative to inclusion, would smooth transition of children and families from preschool to kindergarten.

The OEC is also proud to support the University of Connecticut's Pre-K-3 Leadership Program, which has graduated two cohorts of Pre-K-3 fellows and enrolled a third. Pre-K-3 participants focus on understanding special considerations relative to curriculum, instruction and assessment of children preschool to grade 3. PDG will actively promote the program to its community partners and community teams within PDG. Nine of the fellows to-date are from PDG communities - Bridgeport, Hamden, Killingly, Manchester, and Torrington.

Three of the fellows from the first cohort of the UCONN Pre-K-3 Leadership Program from Bridgeport, Manchester and Torrington, have agreed to serve on the PDG Birth-Third Grade Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will recruit additional fellows from the third cohort at the appropriate time. The advisory group will meet quarterly throughout the grant to support and oversee grant efforts to strengthen the continuum.

The content from the original application described above is substantial. The Advisory Group will consider what can be included in an achievable plan to address these system level goals in the years 3 and 4 of the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High Quality State Preschool Slots (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in using at least 50% of the State's federal grant award to create new State Preschool Program slots that will increase the overall number of new slots in State Preschool Programs that meet the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

Connecticut's ambitious and achievable plan, funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), was built on the OEC's existing state preschool infrastructure. PDG has allowed Connecticut to expand access to high-quality state preschool programs and improve the quality of existing State Preschool Programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 712 eligible preschoolers in year one, and 730 in year two. In Year one, 430 of the total 712 total spaces were committed to expanding new preschool program spaces that met the definition of high-quality as defined by the grant. In year two, that number slightly increased to 439.

As outlined in other sections of this report, the PDG was implemented using existing state preschool infrastructure through School Readiness Councils. Each Council is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues related to the state's School Readiness program.

At the close of year two, Connecticut was successfully partnering with 13 Councils to deliver high-quality preschool to 703 eligible four-year olds in 37 programs and 55 classrooms throughout the state. Of those eligible children, 60% were being served in expansion spaces and 40% in improved spaces. Of the \$9,674,120 in year two committed to supporting expansion and improved spaces,

\$6,990,800 (72%) is earmarked to create new expansion spaces which include both 6-hour, school-day, school year programs as well as 10-hour day, full-year programs.

According to recent data compiled via PDG Interim Reports, 35 of 37 PDG early learning providers reported that all structural elements of high-quality defined in the grant were fully-operational in every PDG classroom within their site. Two programs reported that one high-quality structural element was still being refined and/or not in every PDG classroom. One structural element was evidence-based health and safety standards, the other was inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and participation in all opportunities. With regard to evidence-based health and safety standards, every PDG program is either licensed, NAEYC accredited/Headstart approved and/or implements ECERS assessments. Further conversation is needed to understand specifically why the program reported that the structural element was not in place, these conversations will occur and be any issues resolved by March 2017. As for the remaining program reporting not implementing the structural element related to inclusion, follow up revealed that the program was still working with the public school system to break down the barriers to have services outlined on a child's IEP provided at their center. The program reported an expected implementation date of 9/1/17.

Every PDG classroom is receiving high-quality professional development that focuses on five key areas: CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Social emotional development, Response to Intervention, Special Education Referral and Dual Language Learners. This high-quality professional development, along with assessment of all PDG classrooms using CLASS ensures that developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments are present and aligned with the Connecticut ELDS. The high-quality professional learning model was designed specifically for the PDG and is delivered and evaluated based on adult learning theories and current research and practices. It tests a unique professional learning delivery model, supported by best practices and peer-reviewed literature on teacher effectiveness, that includes highly individualized coaching and consultation as the primary medium to influence knowledge, understanding and practices within a classroom as opposed to the 'cookie-cutter' large group trainings which are more commonly utilized. The design, delivery, and assessment of the high-quality professional learning are rooted in core competencies and delivered by approved facilitators and coaches that hold the competencies needed to address learning needs.

Each PDG program and classroom also participates in evidence-based health and safety standards as measured by either OEC's licensing division, NAEYC accreditation and/or ECERS assessments. Every PDG funded early learning provider must be NAEYC accredited, or attain accreditation within three years of being funded. Interim measures include an ECERS rating within the classroom at least once per year. 25 of 37 PDG funded programs are NAEYC accredited --of the 12 not accredited, 10 are programs with expansion spaces. These 12 programs will receive an ECERS rating by the end of the program year (June 2016) and results will be monitored by both the OEC and local School Readiness Liaison.

All programs have also reported that they are implementing some form of individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning. The OEC will gather additional data to understand specifically how programs are defining and meeting this high-quality standard.

Each PDG program site has reported that on-site comprehensive services have been implemented and are accessible to all eligible children and their families. 54% of programs reported that children are screened within 45-days of program enrollment. 14% reported screening children within 30 days and another 14% reported screening within 60 days. The remaining 18% reported screening more than once, regularly and periodically. Additionally, 4% of programs reported using only one screening tool,

while the remaining 96% used two or more screening tools including the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), Brigance, Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment Program (DECA) and others. In many cases, PDG funds were able to introduce for the first time, or enhance the frequency of these screenings within PDG classrooms in year one.

Another commonality across PDG programs is their participation in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide nutritious meals and snacks for children. Many programs also reported that PDG funds have allowed them to introduce or enhance this structural element by adding a nutritionist position as well as launching various food and physical fitness activities for children and families in year one. Many programs too have been able to hire additional case managers, social workers or family engagement outreach workers to provide referrals and linkages to families as well as coordinate onsite services such as SNAP.

In total, 31 expansion classrooms with 439 expansion slots were in operation in year two of the PDG. Included in each of these classrooms are the 12 high-quality structural elements defined in the grant that undoubtedly will have a marked effect on the future readiness and success of children when they enter Kindergarten.

Section B: Budget Information

Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

1. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

The figures reported in the APR Data Tables are based on the State Fiscal Year July 1-June 30. All year two figures are actuals-to-date as of December 31, 2016. At the close of the state fiscal year, the OEC will be better able to analyze and report any discrepancies between the state's approved budget and its total expenditures for year two.

In year one, some adjustments were made to the state's original spending plan. These adjustments have occurred because of a few key issues:

- 1) unspent funds distributed to subrecipients
- 2) changes to contract spending
- 3) unutilized funds for PDG staff salaries and benefits
- 4) unutilized travel funds

In year one, during the interim reporting processes, it was discovered that several subrecipients would underutilize funds in the amount of \$714,739 among various categories within subrecipient budgets. Just under \$363,000 of unspent funds at the subrecipient level was the result of actual spaces that went unutilized over a period of time. Just over \$265,000 was the result of overestimating how much transportation might cost in different communities as well as overestimating the use of transportation by PDG eligible families. Transportation is provided through the PDG as a comprehensive service to assist families in getting to and from PDG programs. A majority of unspent funds related to transportation were from a larger PDG community that utilized public transportation which resulted in lower costs per child than in other communities that utilized buses and/or van services. In year two, actual transportation costs from year one were reviewed and awards for this line item were reduced to better reflect anticipated utilization.

Contractual expenses were also reduced in year one due to payments outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed with the University of Connecticut (UConn) to conduct the third-party evaluation for the PDG. Overall funding will not change over the four-year grant period and remains at \$800,000 however, the OEC has added a fifth year to the MOA to ensure data is captured on PDG children served in year 4 when they enter Kindergarten (2019). To support the data collection efforts for children served in the last year of the grant as they enter Kindergarten, the OEC has worked to decrease year one funds for evaluation (from \$385,569 to \$59,854) and increase funds in years 2-4 (from \$414,431 to \$489,959). In year one, both years 1 and 2 evaluation costs were paid to ensure payment by July 1, 2016 as stipulated in the MOA.

In year one, two PDG Project Managers were hired to oversee the implementation of the PDG in Connecticut. Due to later than expected start dates for both project managers, as well as unpaid time off that each position utilized, the salaries and benefits for line items related to salaries and benefits is slightly lower than anticipated.

Lastly, funds from the required \$25,000 set aside for technical assistance in line 14 also went unspent. In year one, OEC staff participated in several peer exchanges and the PDG annual meeting, all of which were helpful in learning about best practices and lessons learned with fellow PDG states. Still though, more than \$17,640 in these budgeted funds went unutilized and some were transferred to line 3 to cover travel costs related to training, monitoring or convening subrecipients.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017).

At this time, the OEC is still planning for year three, which includes budgeting. The OEC does not foresee any substantive changes to its budget in the upcoming year but will notify its federal project officers if changes occur.

Minor revisions include continued support and possible expansion of the PTVHP model to support more relational and informational home visits in year 3. Actual calculations have not yet occurred as to what these costs may be, but the OEC will have a better understanding once information is gathered from subrecipients in March 2017 about the number of each type of visit they would like to conduct. Estimates range anywhere from 130,000 to 175,000 in year 3, up from 90,000 in year two.

3. Describe the State's progress on its plan for sustainability at the end of the grant period to ensure that the number and percentage of Eligible Children with access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded, including to additional High-Need Communities.

Connecticut is firmly committed to sustaining high-quality state preschool programs after the grant period ends. The OEC is currently investigating ways in which available state funding for state preschool programs can ensure that at least some of the originally proposed 428 expansion and 284 improved spaces in the 13 subrecipient communities continue.

In Connecticut's PDG application, the state was anticipating a statewide expansion of 3,000 spaces over the course of three years beginning in 2015 (1,000 in each year), as well as the introduction of the Smart Start initiative.

In year one, Connecticut's Smart Start program began during school year 2015-2016 and provided funding for local school districts to serve three and four-year-olds with certified teachers in programs operated by local Boards of Education. The \$205 million Smart Start initiative, funded over a 10-year period has the potential to expand the state preschool program by another 2,000 slots. As of December 31, 2015 there are an additional 341 children served in Smart Start classrooms in 13 public school districts across CT. In year two, as of December 31, 2016 there are an additional 521 children served in Smart Start classrooms in 17 public school districts across CT. The Smart Start initiative and the PDG were both included in the anticipated statewide expansion of 1,000 spaces in Fiscal Year 2016.

The OEC is participating in various trainings, webinars and in-person meetings conducted by the state's PDG technical assistance provider, CEELO, and has participated in the peer exchange related to financing and sustaining high-quality preschool programs. The meeting has allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of how to develop a strategic financing plan, including the costs and resources available and innovative financing strategies to sustain access to high quality programs once federal funding ends.

Lastly, through the third-party evaluation being conducted by UCONN, the OEC hopes to better understand the true cost of providing high-quality preschool programs in different types of early care and education settings. Through the PDG, the OEC proposed the following rates:

\$12,800 EXPANSION, new 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$18,200 EXPANSION, new 10 Hour-Day, Year-Round space

\$ 8,300 IMPROVED, improving an existing 2.5 Hour-Day to 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$ 6,800 IMPROVED, improving existing 6 Hour-Day, School-Year space

\$ 9,530 IMPROVED, improving existing 10 Hour-Day, Year-Round space

Through the UCONN evaluation, as well as continuous monitoring efforts, the OEC will continue to

analyze costs and expenditures by subrecipients to determine whether proposed rates are sufficient in funding high-quality preschool programs and for the purposes of planning universal access for all high-need three and four year-olds in the state. While the actual cost-analyses will not begin until the end of state fiscal year 2017, in order to compare two years' worth of data, the OEC has recognized where some costs have been overestimated or underestimated such as transportation costs (overestimated) and liaison salaries to support infrastructure (underestimated). The OEC has based year two spending on some high-level cost analyses which will better prepare the state to understand the total cost of high-quality preschool and move towards understanding sustainability.

Initial plans for sustainability include absorbing components of the high-quality professional learning being delivered in PDG classrooms into the state's quality improvement system. Initial conversations have begun, and a third-party evaluation is being conducted, to understand what areas of professional learning have the highest impact and are the most sustainable.

The OEC will continue to work with subrecipients through the grant period to discuss methods of sustainability to maintain or increase access to high-quality preschool programs and continue to serve eligible children after the grant period.

4. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies, if any, between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

The figures reported in the APR Data Tables are based on the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015 and ending June 30, 2016 for year one, and July 1, 2016-December 31, 2016 for year two. At the close of the current state fiscal year, the OEC will be better able to analyze and report any discrepancies between the state's approved budget and its total expenditures as well as that of subrecipients for year two.

As mentioned previously, through the year one interim reporting process, it was discovered that several subrecipients would underutilize funds in the amount of \$714,739 among various categories within their budgets. Just under \$363,000 of unspent funds at the subrecipient level was the result of actual spaces that went unutilized over a period of time.

Just over \$265,000 was the result of overestimating how much transportation might cost in different communities as well as overestimating the use of transportation by PDG eligible families.

Transportation is provided through the PDG as a comprehensive service to assist families in getting to and from PDG programs. For one subrecipient, transportation costs were reduced by almost \$34,000 due to underutilization by eligible families. Initial estimates determined that many families would use the transportation provided at this site however, most families preferred to transport their own children which left an overage of funds in the subrecipient's budget. PDG staff worked with the Liaison in that community to reallocate the funds to another program in the same community that had the capacity and need, to deliver transportation services. Additionally, a majority of unspent funds related to transportation were due to a larger PDG community that utilized public transportation to transport eligible families to and from the program. This resulted in a lower costs per child than in other communities that utilized buses and/or van services.

In year one, two subrecipient budgets were amended due to low enrollment. The OEC has worked with the Liaison in each community to increase enrollment however, the budget was still decreased due to slots not having been filled during a three-month period.

Subrecipient budgets were also modified due to unspent admin funds as well as funds not being fully expended for professional learning related activities. Funds for these purposes totaled just over \$86,000 however, funds related to professional learning were the result of a delayed project start by a contractor and could not be avoided.

Year two interim budgets have recently been submitted to the OEC and will be reviewed in March 2017. It is projected, as in year one, that budget changes to subrecipient budgets will not affect the state's ability to achieve approved project activities or objectives.
