



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Early Childhood Development

Preschool Development Grant
Birth Through Five
Report to Congress

**Highlighting a Sampling of PDG B-5
Grant Activities Between 2019–2021**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Program Background	3
Initial Grants.....	3
Renewal Grants.....	4
Highlights of State Strategies and Accomplishments	4
Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning.....	5
Maximizing Parent and Family Engagement in the B-5 System.....	6
Family Engagement.....	6
Maximizing Family Voice.....	6
Communication Strategies.....	7
Supporting the Early Care and Education Workforce	8
Promoting an Integrated B-5 Early Care and Education System.....	10
Maximizing Efficiencies through Systems Changes	10
Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment.....	11
New Partnerships.....	12
Early Care and Education Systems Governance and Policies.....	13
Promoting Early Care and Education Sustainability	14
Braiding Public and Private Funding Streams	14
Coordinating Services.....	14
Leveraging Data Systems to Support Early Care and Education Systems	15
Improving the Quality of Early Care and Education Programs and Systems	17
Expansion or Revision of Quality Standards	18
Promoting Access to Consumer Education and Engagement.....	19
Providing Resources to Serve Children and Families	20
Supporting Effective and Appropriate Transitions and School Readiness	20
Improved Transitions	20
Supporting and Measuring School Readiness.....	22
Reaching Underserved Populations	22
Research and Evaluation	23
Program Performance Evaluation.....	24
Summary and Conclusion	25
Appendix A: PDG B-5 Grant Recipients	26

Introduction

This report is a response to section 9213 of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which requires the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the heads of federal agencies that administer federal early childhood education programs, prepare and submit a report on the Preschool Development Grants initiative to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the U.S. House of Representatives, including how the use by states of Preschool Development Grant funds under section 9212 has led to the better utilization of resources.

Program Background

The Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) initiative supports competitive federal grants to states and territories (“states”) to assist in the strengthening of their early care and education (ECE) systems by improving partnerships, collaboration, and coordination among existing birth through age 5 (B-5) programs and services. With strengthened ECE systems, states can leverage private, local, state, and federal funding and other resources to increase the quality of and access to ECE and maximize parental choice and meaningful family engagement. Supporting states and territories in building, enhancing, and expanding their ECE systems allows them to improve the necessary infrastructure to sustain the system and fund key initiatives that enhance quality and coordination across early childhood programs. In turn, these efforts contribute to state efforts to provide young children from families with low income or other disadvantages access to high-quality ECE experiences that prepare them to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

To achieve the goal of building, enhancing, and expanding ECE systems to help children succeed in school, states and territories are:

- ▶ leveraging existing federal, state, local, and non-governmental resources to strengthen coordination and delivery of services across programs;
- ▶ working to improve the equitable participation of all children;
- ▶ improving program quality across participating programs by aligning program standards and coordinating professional development activities;
- ▶ maximizing family and parental choice and knowledge;
- ▶ investing in and supporting the early childhood workforce;
- ▶ helping ECE programs identify and access resources that can support long-term stability;
- ▶ improving school readiness for groups of children who experience the largest achievement gaps; and
- ▶ elevating and supporting efforts to coordinate instructional alignment and developmentally appropriate learning experiences from birth through third grade.

Between 2019 and 2021, there were two types of PDG B-5 grants: Initial Grants and Renewal Grants. More information on the two kinds of grants is provided below.

Initial Grants

Initial Grants are 1-year grants that support states and territories to complete a comprehensive, statewide B-5 needs assessment and use the needs assessment findings to inform the development of a statewide B-5 strategic plan. Initial Grants also allow states and territories to improve communication with parents,

enhance parent knowledge and decision-making skills, provide various types of training, and increase the number and scope of meaningful parent and family engagement opportunities.

In December 2018, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded PDG B-5 Initial Grants to 46 states and territories; ACF awarded an Initial Grant to six additional states a year later in December 2019. A full list of states and territories that received PDG B-5 Initial and Renewal Grants can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Initial Grant recipients use PDG B-5 grant awards to conduct comprehensive, statewide B-5 needs assessments to assess state ECE system needs, such as the availability and quality of ECE programs in the state, including those programs serving underserved populations as well as children in rural areas. States leverage the needs assessment to inform the development of their statewide B-5 strategic plan. This plan serves as a road map for states to improve collaboration, coordination, and quality improvement activities and optimize existing ECE resources in order to increase the quality of and access to services for young children and their families with a focus on preparing low-income and disadvantaged children for kindergarten and beyond. Upon the completion of their statewide B-5 needs assessment and strategic plan, states can use any remaining PDG B-5 funding to begin the implementation of their B-5 strategic plan.

Renewal Grants

Renewal Grants are 3-year grants that support states and territories to implement activities based on needs and goals identified in their strategic plan, including periodically updating their needs assessment and strategic plan, more effectively coordinating with existing programs, improving efficiency and better use of existing resources, more meaningfully engaging parents and providers in programs and policy, improving overall quality, building and supporting the workforce, maximizing family choice and knowledge, expanding access to mixed-delivery programs and services, and improving transition practices and the actual transitions from ECE programs to the local educational agency or elementary school.

Between December 2019 and December 2020, 28 of these 52 states and territories received 3-year PDG B-5 Renewal Grants to continue to implement the systemic improvement activities identified through their needs assessment and strategic plan development processes, including efforts to increase access to high-quality ECE for underserved children and families. Each grant recipient implemented numerous activities and achieved accomplishments unique to their state's or territory's needs and priorities.

Highlights of State Strategies and Accomplishments

This report highlights strategies that PDG B-5 Initial and Renewal Grant recipients (“recipients”) have leveraged to strengthen ECE systems between January 2019 and December 2021, looking across key themes and areas of priority.¹ The remainder of this report contains, for each of the following areas, between two and 12 state snapshots of progress made during this 2-year period. Meanwhile, for a fuller picture of each state's efforts and progress, one may visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ece/pdg-b5-grantee-reports>, where Initial Grant Final Reports and the first wave of Renewal Grant Annual Performance Progress Reports are located.

¹ Data for this report comes from 52 PDG B-5 Initial Grant Final Reports submitted to ACF in 2021 or from 28 PDG B-5 Renewal Grant Annual Performance Progress Reports that were submitted to ACF in 2022.

Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning

Many states reported this was the first comprehensive needs assessment they ever conducted, or the first one they had conducted in many years. The vast majority of states' needs assessments were led by collaborations across multiple state departments, sometimes including the governor's office or a children's cabinet. All states reported using multiple methods in collecting data for the needs assessment. The most common collection methods were administrative data sets (both state and national levels); family, provider, and community stakeholder surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community meetings; and existing agency reports and assessments. States made concerted efforts to include as many stakeholders and partners as possible in this process, with specific emphasis on removing barriers to stakeholder engagement and including groups that may traditionally not have participated in previous efforts.

The needs assessments identified service and infrastructure gaps that the state agencies and policymakers needed to develop or improve related to ECE programs and services, with a focus on how to better align funding sources, increase access to programs, improve workforce capability, build integrated data systems, and more. The assessments also identified the needs of early childhood professionals and programs, including expanding professional development efforts, improving compensation, and increasing the number of infant/toddler programs. Family access to ECE programs, including home visiting and services for children with disabilities, were found to be lacking in many states.

States leveraged the findings of the needs assessments to develop their strategic plans. Most states held community listening sessions where parents, service providers, and other early childhood stakeholders provided input into the needs of families with young children. Recipients reported that community meetings and focus groups resulted in receiving information from hundreds of ECE providers, family members, policymakers, and advocates. As states finalized their strategic plans, they identified opportunities for new activities and initiatives as well as for improving existing programs, including the following examples.

Through its needs assessment, **Michigan** learned about specific barriers families were facing to access licensed child care programs. The state's needs assessment highlighted large service gaps, particularly relating to the state's capacity to serve rural children and families. In response, Michigan used PDG B-5 funds to create a Rural Child Care Innovation Program cohort in six counties. These counties developed a Community Solution Action Plan that included innovative strategies to increase the supply of high-quality and affordable child care. The plan also included improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers through business leadership cohorts and one-on-one consulting.

Family engagement was a consistent theme throughout **North Carolina's** strategic plan. To support families and connect them to needed resources, North Carolina embedded engagement strategies and leadership best practices across the state's ECE system, including incorporating its Family Engagement and Leadership Framework throughout state and local early childhood education agencies, governance, and advisory bodies. In addition, a partnership with PBS North Carolina engaged more than 80,000 educators, children, and their families through public media and community outreach, with North Carolina expanding an Early Childhood Awareness Campaign to air five video shorts on PBS North Carolina networks.

Maximizing Parent and Family Engagement in the B-5 System

Parents and families are children’s best advocates and first teachers. They also make many decisions that significantly impact their children’s well-being, development, and education. One of the most important decisions families make is selecting the ECE programs that best meet their needs. Maximizing families’ knowledge of available programs and services and increasing their engagement helps to improve the quality of ECE programs. PDG grant recipients have implemented a variety of strategies and approaches to maximize family choice and engagement within their ECE system and programs.

Family Engagement

Recipients used PDG B-5 funds to increase family engagement and improve knowledge of child development as a means to increase participation in ECE programs. PDG B-5 supported states in ensuring families had knowledge of their state’s mixed-delivery system and a voice in ECE system program administration and policies. The following examples highlight how recipients used PDG B-5 funds to improve participation in ECE programs through family engagement.

PDG B-5 funded the creation of **Washington’s** Early Learning Coordination Plan, which was informed by contributions from 150 community members and led to the development of a report identifying recommendations on how the state could better use its existing resources. One recommendation was to create formal opportunities for families to co-design, co-develop, and evaluate approaches and programs to meet the needs of their communities.

Missouri worked with the National Parent Leadership Institute to develop a parent leadership training that was piloted in two Missouri communities. The training included 20 sessions designed to help parents build skills in advocating for their families within their community, state, and nation.

Alabama provided tele-intervention services for families during the pandemic. Early intervention practitioners provided information on evaluations, referrals, and services to families with infants and toddlers living in rural regions who typically had difficulty accessing these resources. To address barriers of access to ECE programs due to geographical constraints, Alabama decided to continue to support the tele-intervention services for families after the pandemic.

Nevada developed the Consumer Education website, which evolved into a collaborative partnership between the Office of Early Learning and Development (which included PDG B-5 and the Quality Rating and Improvement System, or QRIS) and the Child Care Development Program. This partnership allowed Nevada to streamline efforts within the ECE mixed-delivery system, as well as adopt the Silver State Stars QRIS website as a temporary consumer education website while developing a sustainable, long-term plan for a new hub. This approach also allowed Nevada to engage stakeholders more meaningfully in their efforts to better understand the Child Care and Development Fund regulations that govern consumer education websites.

New York developed a statewide media campaign—*Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing*. This was a public awareness and action campaign that helped parents recognize their power to boost their children’s early brain and vocabulary development through simple, everyday actions, such as describing things while walking outside or singing songs together during bath time.

Maximizing Family Voice

PDG B-5 played an important role in supporting recipients to incorporate family voice into ECE systems-building activities, implement innovative communication strategies, and support professionals who worked

directly with families. States also designed leadership and advocacy programs to empower parents to provide feedback on programs in which their children participated. To increase the likelihood that parents would have a voice in the decisions related to them and their children, states included parents on committees, boards, and cabinets to provide a forum for reciprocal communication and to respect parents as partners. The following examples highlight strategies recipients used to incorporate family voice at the system level.

California addressed barriers to families' participation in ECE programming by creating opportunities to elevate family voices to inform ECE recommendations and learn about families' lived experiences. California's Child Care Resource Center coordinated feedback sessions with families to solicit input on child care decision-making and learn about the impact of the pandemic on families. Families discussed their lived experiences with challenges in child care, missed developmental milestones during the pandemic, equity issues and bias in the early learning and care system, and child care for children with disabilities. The feedback sessions also provided an opportunity for caregivers to make connections, develop their leadership skills, and receive resources.

The **Connecticut** Office of Early Childhood (OEC) used PDG B-5 to create its first Parent Cabinet. The OEC Parent Cabinet, a parent-led advisory group, worked directly with the state agency that oversaw child care and Care4Kids (child care subsidy), home visiting, child care licensing, and early intervention. Members of the Cabinet provided guidance on how to improve programs, policies, and laws related to young children and their families; the needs of families from all backgrounds; and how OEC could form lasting and effective partnerships with families.

Communication Strategies

Recipients used PDG B-5 funds to develop new ways to communicate and engage with families, such as public awareness campaigns, written materials, and even traveling buses. States developed a variety of resources for parents and caregivers to use and connected with families online and through text messaging services. To better support parent and family engagement, the states created tools and training and provided technical assistance to ECE program staff, coaches, school district personnel, and community stakeholders. Common topics for the trainings included literacy strategies, social and emotional development, infant and toddler development, and transitions. The following examples highlight how recipients communicated with families.

Michigan piloted the Steps Initiative with families of infants and toddlers, developing resources and messages for caregivers to support daily interactions with children in developmentally and age-appropriate ways. Steps Initiative materials and brochures were available in several languages, including Spanish and Arabic. In addition, Michigan completed an in-depth family research project to understand how to communicate with families in a manner that honors their culture and language.

New York's *Talking is Teaching* media campaign increased awareness of the importance of talking, reading, singing, and playing with children from birth. New York featured material from *Talking is Teaching* on social media display banners and throughout neighborhoods—including on public transit, on street furniture, and in high-traffic locations such as mall elevators, restrooms, billboards, and wallscapes. In 2021, the campaign had more than 194 million total impressions, drove 347,438 clicks to the portal, and had 31,292 mobile application installations.

Georgia developed the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards website for early learning professionals and caregivers. The website was created to serve as a resource for caregivers to

understand the standards and developmental milestones of children birth to age 5. It included resources and developmentally appropriate activities to support early learning.

With PDG B-5 funding, **Nebraska** revised *Learning Begins at Birth* (LBAB), which provided families with information about child development and how to nurture it, parent-child interactions that build social-emotional mental health, what quality child care is and how to find it, children's health, and services available to children and parents. Nebraska used PDG B-5 funds to translate the materials into more languages and print copies in multiple languages for distribution. Since this update, hospitals, physician offices, health departments, cultural centers, nonprofit service agencies, resettlement agencies, educational service units, child care providers, and Head Start had received 79,696 English, 28,085 Spanish, 2,083 Arabic, 414 Vietnamese, and 703 Korean LBAB booklets.

Two Gen on Wheels was a PDG B-5-funded program in **Puerto Rico**. Through this program, a bus equipped with internet access, television screens, computers, and other materials and tools traveled each month to remote communities that had limited access to ECE resources. Program staff on the bus provided families with information on early childhood development, strategies for managing emotions, family support resources, and a directory of free services organized by geographic area to help connect these families with resources.

Colorado used PDG B-5 funds to create the *Colorado Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* to define and identify common family engagement concepts to support family engagement across sectors and settings. This framework was intended for various groups, such as pediatricians and social service organizations, to guide a systematic and broad shift in the way services were designed and provided to families and young children in a variety of service contexts.

Supporting the Early Care and Education Workforce

At the heart of all quality ECE programs are well-qualified and supported teachers and staff who interact directly with children and are an essential component of a high-quality ECE program. Access to professional development opportunities is important because it ensures that teachers and staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide children with high-quality experiences. Teachers and staff also need other supports such as a wage that supports their basic needs, health benefits, and paid leave. The following examples highlight how PDG B-5 grant recipients supported their ECE workforce.

Wisconsin used PDG B-5 to support the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® program scholarships for early childhood educators to make credit-based education more affordable, improve teacher compensation, and increase early childhood educator retention. With low wages and staffing shortages in ECE programs, scholarships play an important role in improving the quality of ECE programs. In addition, through PDG B-5 funding, Wisconsin early childhood professionals were able to use a Registry Coupon to access the Wisconsin Registry, which provides critical workforce information to inform policies and programs at no cost. Over 4,000 more providers than usual updated their Registry Profiles with the Registry Coupons.

Georgia used PDG B-5 funds to complete an evaluation of its Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Scholars program. DECAL Scholars support ECE professionals through education counseling, scholarships, and financial awards for credential achievements. To better understand the utilization and effectiveness of the program, Georgia completed an evaluation using surveys and historical data to examine patterns of use and identify gaps across the state. The results indicated the need for more

support for Spanish-speaking recipients and regionally focused marketing on the program's benefits. In response to the results, the program administrator added a full-time Spanish-speaking staff member.

Arizona increased efforts to support a collaboration among the many training and technical assistance programs and agencies that provided professional development across the state by developing a cross-sector collaborative Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network to improve their overall professional development system. The Network served as a resource to build Arizona's early education workforce and promote the early childhood professional development system.

Maryland developed a 45-hour coaching and mentoring series to better serve programs in reaching higher quality. Through technical assistance, institutes, parent forums, and online modules, the state also trained cohorts of professionals to support multilanguage learners through the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) Early Years program.

Florida revised core competencies to reflect best practices and provided an essential framework for improving ECE professional preparation. This PDG B-5 recipient developed coaching standards to help strengthen coaching practices throughout the state. Florida also generated an interactive, searchable early childhood professional development catalog representative of course offerings from multiple agencies to provide the state's first cross-disciplinary professional development catalog to meet the needs of the B-5 workforce.

New Hampshire created opportunities for professional development specific to practice-based coaching and play-based learning with a total of 32 kindergarten teachers from 16 school districts, thereby supporting the state's efforts to improve transition from preschool into kindergarten.

Iowa developed a state-level professional development system based on the Iowa Professional Development Model used in all Iowa pre-K–12 school districts. The system included collecting and analyzing child development data, setting goals, selecting/revising/writing content, identifying processes to disseminate and implement content, scheduling provision of training opportunities for the workforce, increasing collaboration with state-level agencies and departments, collecting implementation data, and completing evaluations.

Rhode Island worked to address ECE workforce turnover. The state created a registered apprenticeship program that provided professional development and technical assistance in infant/toddler classrooms, offered enhanced compensation, and supported programs sponsoring apprentices.

Arkansas trained over 2,500 early childhood professionals in the evidence-based *Building Strong Brains* curriculum. Those trained were from public and private education, home visiting programs, and family and community medical practices.

Kentucky planned the transition from a professional development framework to a workforce development framework. This transition entailed the inclusion of pipeline/recruitment strategies for child care, Head Start, and public preschool, as well as professional development and education and workforce retention and stability strategies. This framework included a career lattice, updated guidance for technical assistance and training, apprenticeship opportunities, and information about scholarships.

Maine offered joint training to staff, administrators, and partners on increasing the quality of settings to serve children with disabilities or suspected delays. They provided on-demand training, online facilitated module training, professional learning communities, and on-site consultations for teachers and administrators.

California created online professional learning communities to reduce isolation and buffer stress and anxiety experienced within the ECE workforce, including those working in child care centers, family child care, and family, friend, and neighbor care. Online professional learning communities provided professional development to the ECE workforce and were especially beneficial in increasing the engagement of rural providers. Professional development topics included strengthening families and protective factors in the community.

Promoting an Integrated B-5 Early Care and Education System

To support the goal of ensuring that all children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed, PDG B-5 recipients engaged in a range of activities to develop or enhance their statewide ECE systems. When families access more than one service to support the healthy development of their young children, they often navigate multiple systems of eligibility, enrollment, and access on their own. States and territories can support families by improving the coordination and delivery of services across models and funding streams. Service coordination has the additional benefit of using resources more efficiently and creating a stronger ECE system. There are many ways to improve coordination and service delivery within state and territory ECE systems. This section includes examples of how recipients coordinated services in new and unique ways in support of the development or enhancement of a statewide ECE system.

In **Washington**, community outreach efforts revealed the need for centralized information about available resources. Help Me Grow Washington (HMG WA), a community-driven resource and referral linkage system, connected young children and their families to appropriate services and community supports. The initial investment of PDG B-5 funds in HMG WA helped the state build critical infrastructure, allowing for the expansion of Help Me Grow to areas within the state where these services were not yet available.

Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS) included community partners in a pilot of Child Find, a comprehensive system for screening; early identification of children with, or at risk of, disabilities; and referrals for needed services. The Child Find pilot included exploration of the child abuse and neglect system. AEIS also worked to identify barriers for families living in geographically isolated regions and Indigenous populations.

Illinois enhanced an aligned, cross-systems approach for the infant and early childhood mental health consultant workforce. This work involved the implementation of a statewide consultant database and the development of the structure necessary to provide essential and ongoing professional development to consultants serving child care, early intervention, preschool, and home visiting programs.

In **Rhode Island**, PDG B-5 funding supported Health Equity Zones (HEZ). Each HEZ integrated funding from up to 20 sources to offer a range of services and programs to children and families living in that zone. HEZs used PDG B-5 funds to offer family navigators and family support programming. Family navigators used their extensive knowledge to support families and connect them with programs and services that met their unique needs. Examples of family support programming included Incredible Years training and play groups for families who used resources from evidence-based family home visiting programs.

Maximizing Efficiencies through Systems Changes

States and territories often administer programs and services that support young children and their families across multiple state or territory agencies. For example, a state or territory could administer preschool programs via their Department of Education, child care subsidies through their the Department

for Children and Families, and evidence-based home visiting at the Department of Health. Several states found success in co-locating programs that serve young children and their families in a single, dedicated early childhood department. Aligning services across agencies can help strengthen the ECE system and maximize efficiency. The following examples highlight how PDG B-5 funds allowed recipients to improve efficiency in use of resources.

In 2021, **Missouri** transitioned 20 state programs serving children and families or providing professional development to providers into the Office of Childhood to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the ECE system at the state level. As the lead agency for the PDG B-5, the Office of Childhood supported continued collaboration and alignment of the state's ECE system.

Oregon initiated the creation of the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) in 2021. DELIC oversaw ECE programs previously administered by different agencies. This new department ended Oregon's bifurcated system, in which one agency administered child care assistance and another administered all other ECE programs, including child care licensing and monitoring. The new structure reduced burden and duplication in many ways. For example, DELIC, rather than multiple agencies, conducted all background checks as part of the state's Central Background Registry. In addition, DELIC consolidated funding streams supporting Oregon prekindergarten so programs no longer had to deal with the challenges and confusion of having contracts from two different agencies.

Virginia drove quality improvement in all publicly funded early childhood programs through a new state law that established a unified public-private system for ECE. The legislation established an Early Childhood Advisory Committee and a uniform measurement and improvement system, called VQB5, for all publicly funded early childhood programs. It transferred licensure and regulatory authority for child care programs and oversight of the Child Care Subsidy Program to the Virginia Department of Education. These changes, informed by the PDG B-5 needs assessment and strategic plan, were implemented to reduce duplications, strengthen the quality of teaching and learning experiences, and increase access for children and families.

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment

Coordinated application, eligibility, and enrollment (CAEE) is an important strategy states and territories can use in ECE systems-building to maximize family choice. CAEE is a common process for recruiting families, applying for services, determining eligibility, matching families with providers, and enrolling children and families into programs and services. CAEE increases access to services for families, improves cooperation among providers, and makes for better use of public resources. The following examples highlight how recipients supported CAEE using PDG B-5 funds.

In 2021, **Oregon** released the *Oregon Coordinated Enrollment Guidebook*, which outlined the state's vision for coordinated enrollment and included examples of coordinated enrollment activities in the state along with resources from other states and localities implementing coordinated enrollment activities. Starting in 2020, the regional Early Learning Hubs received PDG B-5 funds to implement coordinated enrollment strategies that included marketing, outreach, and recruitment; eligibility determination and programming; and selection and placement.

Louisiana used PDG B-5 funds to expand Ready Start Networks, a community network model in which each of the 66 Ready Start Networks measured quality and coordinated enrollment for all early childhood program types (publicly funded child care, Head Start, and school-based prekindergarten). Each Ready Start Network lead agency was responsible for coordinating the unified quality rating system for all

participating programs in infant, toddler, and prekindergarten classrooms; conducting administrative functions for the community network, including serving as the fiscal agent; and coordinating the B-5 child count, enrollment, and the state funding application for the community network. By coordinating delivery models and funding streams, Louisiana used existing resources more efficiently to serve vulnerable or underserved children; increased partnerships between school systems, Head Start programs, and child care sites; and improved ECE quality.

In 2020, **Colorado** launched a CAEE toolkit that local organizations and communities could use to implement CAEE in their communities. Stakeholders expressed an interest in state leadership taking a role in ensuring the availability of CAEE processes in early childhood. Colorado established a CAEE workgroup of representatives from families, community-based ECE programs, Head Start, the Denver Preschool Program, local education programs, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, the Colorado Preschool Program, early childhood councils, nonprofit organizations, early childhood stakeholders, state agencies, and the governor's office to develop recommendations for a state system of CAEE. The workgroup mapped processes, timelines, and key considerations for operationalizing the system.

New Partnerships

Building and enhancing the ECE system also means improving the coordination of services among more than the typical ECE programs and services. PDG B-5 recipients reported previous collaborations among some agencies or organizations in the ECE system. However, in a number of states, the role of some of the agencies was expanded, or new relationships were developed, with partners and stakeholders that did not exist before implementing the PDG B-5 initiative. For example, members from different organizations were added to advisory committees, became more involved as key partners in PDG B-5 activities, or hosted professional development sessions for early childhood providers.

The needs assessment process served to identify organizations and agencies to invite to the conversations and play a role in some of the PDG B-5 work planning and activities. The most common programs and agencies that became new partners in the ECE system-building work were Title I, tribal organizations/tribes, agencies administering the Mental Health Block Grant, other behavioral health services, public housing authorities, refugee-serving organizations, faith-based entities, colleges and universities, and business leaders. The following examples highlight how recipients used PDG B-5 funds to collaborate with new partners to improve the coordination of services that support young children and their families.

PDG B-5 funds in **Wisconsin** supported the formation of Project Growth. Project Growth, also funded by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act, advanced and deepened partnerships among ECE programs, businesses, and economic development. The Department of Children and Families worked with the Department of Workforce Development and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to create Project Growth, which focused on strategic planning around child care supply in communities and contracts for slots to cover child care costs for employees.

North Carolina used PDG B-5 funds to build a partnership between the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) and PBS North Carolina. The partners worked together to implement communication and outreach strategies for educators, families, and their children across the state. Through this partnership, DCDEE supported PBS North Carolina to build relationships with the state's

early childhood mixed-delivery system partners. PBS North Carolina collaborated with a range of local and state early childhood partners in PBS activities to engage educators, families, and young children.

In **New Mexico**, through PDG B-5 efforts, the state built and strengthened relationships between Housing Authority leadership and staff and early childhood home visitors, case managers, and families receiving services.

Early Care and Education Systems Governance and Policies

States' PDG B-5 Initial Grant efforts highlighted the need to improve ECE systems and services within their states and enabled applicants to leverage Renewal Grants to build on Initial Grant efforts and strengthen those systems. As a result of their PDG B-5 work, several states reported having bills introduced in their state legislatures, and some states started the process of consolidating early childhood programs and services into one department to strengthen their coordination. During the period of the Initial Grant, several states received increases in funding for various early childhood programs, including special education, pre-K, and two-generation initiatives. Other states conducted fiscal mapping to identify gaps and opportunities to prioritize funding. Examples of approaches to strengthening state policies and governance of ECE systems are highlighted below.

Oklahoma expanded early intervention funding for infants, toddlers, and their families. In addition, they established a state leadership team to address disparities in discipline practices; promote family engagement; and foster inclusion of children with, and at risk for, developmental delays and disabilities.

Rhode Island transferred the child care licensing unit to the Department of Human Services to strengthen quality child care services for families while also supporting the workforce. They also developed new licensing regulations. The state further developed a governance model guided by the following principles: collaborative leadership, commitment to a mixed-delivery model, inclusive and diverse engagement, focus on vulnerable populations, alignment of funding with impact, and workforce advocacy and support.

In 2019, the **Utah** legislature created the Governor's Early Childhood Commission to support Utah parents and families by sharing information, including comprehensive, accurate information regarding the availability of services for children ages 6 and younger; facilitating coordination between state agencies and community partners; coordinating service delivery across the comprehensive early childhood system; and identifying opportunities for alignment of standards, rules, policies, and procedures across programs and agencies that supported children in early childhood. The Commission leveraged the needs assessment and strategic plan to support their goal of developing a coordinated and aligned B-5 system.

Vermont leveraged the Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team, a public-private partnership model, to house PDG B-5 efforts. This structure allowed for input needed from stakeholders to move systems change forward in the Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan Committees.

Oregon's needs assessment guided discussions with legislative and state leaders around the future of early learning and included changes to align early learning programs, supporting the passage of the Student Success Act. This Act expanded services to families with various needs, leading to professional learning funding, parent education funding, and the creation of the Equity Fund, which granted funds to culturally specific programs. PDG B-5 grant funds also supported the development of a Legislative Concept for the 2021 legislative session, creating statutory authorization for Early Learning Hubs.

Promoting Early Care and Education Sustainability

Insufficient resources are an ongoing problem in ECE systems and programs. PDG B-5 recipients have used funds and existing government and non-governmental resources to strengthen the delivery of current ECE services and programs by maximizing efficiencies across programs and funding streams. However, existing funding falls short of what is needed. Just one in seven eligible families receives a child care subsidy, and Head Start reaches just one-third of eligible preschool-aged children and about 10% of eligible infants and toddlers. Most early childhood programs have lengthy waiting lists, and without sustained public investment, costs are high for families to participate.

Strategies such as braiding funds, sharing resources, and coordinating services can improve program quality and reach, but truly sustainable ECE programs must include larger federal investment.

Braiding Public and Private Funding Streams

The examples below highlight how states combined and braided multiple funding sources to achieve cross-cutting goals.

California leveraged PDG B-5 to expand its quality improvement system, Quality Counts California (QCC), by enabling local QCC Consortia to combine First 5 California funds, Child Care and Development Fund quality improvement funds, and Proposition 98 education funding.

The **District of Columbia** braided PDG B-5 funds with local funding to lay the foundation of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) project, which aimed to enhance data collection and reporting across the mixed-delivery system.

Mississippi braided private funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and public funds from matching funds provided by state agencies to maximize the federal dollars from the PDG B-5 grant in order to share best practices by means of multiple statewide events. One such event was the Connected for Success Winter Conference, with its focus on educating 195 private child care center providers and 61 Head Start center providers on the 10 comprehensive quality benchmarks (continuous quality improvement, professional development, curriculum, child assessment, transition planning, family engagement, community partnerships, business practices, IT infrastructure, and program evaluation). Keynote and breakout session presenters from various fields presented on these topics to share current best practices with providers, who received professional contact hours for attendance.

The PDG B-5 grant in **Michigan** fostered collaboration and alignment with other grant efforts, namely the Pritzker Prenatal-to-Age-Three State Grant and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant. Michigan combined Pritzker and PDG B-5 funds to conduct a study on the cost of ECE, home visiting, and the IDEA Part C system. This in-depth study provided the opportunity for state agencies and others to work toward increased alignment and efficient use of funding sources.

Coordinating Services

The many programs in a state ECE system provide different kinds of services to young children and their families. To meet their needs, many families use more than one service. Coordinating services at the system level reduces the burden on families to identify and navigate multiple services from several programs. The following examples highlight how recipients used PDG B-5 funds to increase the efficient use of resources through the coordination of services.

To improve developmental screening of young children, **Kansas** launched a statewide Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) online system. Kansas trained 280 providers to use this screening tool, which resulted in more than 17,000 screenings. Kansas also created a regional structure so programs could manage accounts in their service areas. The regional system allowed for the transfer of individual records between programs, with primary caregiver consent, so participating programs could access a child's information without redoing the screening. The state also maintained a resource website with tools for providers to promote and implement screening, including messages to parents, consent form templates, and other resources.

New Hampshire used PDG B-5 funds to develop partnerships and align funding and regulatory requirements related to lead poisoning and to improve the health and well-being of young children and families. The Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (HHLPPP) and the Environmental Public Health Tracking program partnered to combine resources and funding to communities through the state's Regional Public Health Networks and in turn supported a number of partnerships. For example, in 2021, 12 of New Hampshire's Public Health Regions conducted initiatives related to water testing at local child care centers or lead testing in high-risk communities. HHLPPP also partnered with the APPLETREE Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education program to develop lead training as a part of mandatory training for all child care providers. Choose Safe Places, in turn, worked closely with the Child Care Licensing Unit to explore rules and best practices for opportunities to further improve environmental health; it also worked with the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration to provide environmental health training at no cost to the ECE workforce. Similarly, a partnership with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Department of Environmental Services allowed pregnant women to have their well water tested for free and receive materials, education, and resource connections.

New Jersey's central intake system offered pregnant women, families, and providers easy access to resource information and referrals to local community services that promoted child and family wellness. The range of services included prenatal care, nutrition and WIC, home visiting, Head Start/Early Head Start, and child care services. This central intake system was supported by PDG B-5, along with the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (Title V). New Jersey used PDG B-5 funds to strengthen the capacity of these coordinated services by integrating an early childhood specialist into each county to reach additional families.

Leveraging Data Systems to Support Early Care and Education Systems

PDG B-5 supports states to develop or improve a state early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS) to collect, integrate, maintain, and report information across multiple state departments and other public programs. The goal of an ECIDS is to inform community- and state-level policies and practices to support the development of a comprehensive ECE system. A fully operational ECIDS can provide information that results in a more qualified workforce, improved outcomes for children and families, and more knowledgeable policymakers and community leaders.

Planning and building an ECIDS is a complex and long-term undertaking, which is why states and territories are in various stages of development and implementation, from establishing initial data sharing agreements across departments to writing reports based on ECIDS-generated data to inform ECE policies in their systems-building efforts. Some states have included data from workforce registries and

Head Start in their ECIDS to address the ongoing ECE workforce crisis. As an ECIDS matures, states can expand the system's available analytical strategies to allow for more methods to display the data. States reported using community- and state-level data in a variety of ways to inform stakeholders and policymakers. Recipients used charts, graphs, geospatial methodologies, web portals, dashboards, and interactive maps to show the data. This section includes examples of how PDG B-5 helped states advance their ECIDS to strengthen ECE systems.

Minnesota added the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Department of Housing, and Department of Commerce to its data sharing agreements for the state ECIDS. This allowed them to move forward with the goals of coordinated eligibility and services. A toolkit to support local data sharing provided additional support to facilitate local-level collaboration.

South Carolina used PDG B-5 funds to develop and improve their early childhood data system across multiple state agencies and numerous partners. South Carolina improved data coordination and dissemination by expanding the data elements in its integrated data system. They also developed and implemented a data governance structure that included regular data reporting protocols and the initial planning for a data dashboard to make ECE data more accessible to educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public. South Carolina also leveraged multiple funding resources to create a longitudinal data system that connected early childhood and K–12 data. South Carolina added some nontraditional data elements to their early childhood data system focused on improving young children's health outcomes, including emergency room visits, home health care, hospitalizations, and outpatient surgeries.

The **New Jersey** Department of Education used the New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning (NJ-EASEL) as the state's ECIDS. NJ-EASEL collected and integrated data from four state agencies with programs and services that supported young children and their families. New Jersey used PDG B-5 funds to add three source systems to NJ-EASEL: New Jersey Department of Health Birth Records and two New Jersey Department of Children and Families home visiting systems. The addition of these systems helped answer critical questions, such as "What are the characteristics of NJ's vulnerable children and families beginning prenatally?" "Are they on track to succeed?" and "Are they receiving necessary support services?"

Kansas supported data integration efforts between the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund and the Department for Children and Families. Kansas used the integrated data to analyze 6 years of historical data on early childhood services funded by the Children's Cabinet to determine whether those services prevented foster care placement during the same period. The study showed that participation in any of the early childhood services funded by the Children's Cabinet significantly reduced the odds of children entering foster care for any reason. The findings provided the state with evidence that early childhood programs serve as a significant protective factor against maltreatment and generate return on investment.

With PDG B-5 support, **Florida** added more data to its ECIDS to enable the state to identify patterns of access and participation in different service systems. Agencies reported data on the number of children or families participating in the services, the percentage of eligible children or families participating in the service, and the average duration of service participation. The ECIDS supported the state to examine multiple indicators of service use and child health and well-being, including service use profiles to show the number and percentage of families who participated in multiple early childhood and family support services; participation in well-child visits; prenatal care; and Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener results.

Connecticut developed a data inventory so that a team made up of representatives from multiple departments could establish a common understanding of how agency programs received data requests, accessed program data, and fulfilled reporting responsibilities. One result of this activity was state personnel realizing the importance of establishing data collection procedures/policies and integrated data systems at the agency level rather than for individual projects.

Hawaii worked to link data across child care and education settings as they built a more comprehensive data-sharing infrastructure for the state. Hawaii also required a kindergarten entry assessment to support children and their families as they transitioned into kindergarten and beyond.

Texas began to explore the use of state agency data to fully understand the capacity of licensed child care centers, quality of ECE programs and services, and teacher qualifications and compensation. The state proposed to build a cross-program infrastructure through two initiatives: (a) a public-facing analytic tool on quality and school readiness and (b) expansion of its Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) from only collecting data from local education agencies to include child-level data from child care. However, as the grantee began to use state agency data, many limitations were discovered related to disparate data systems. They continued to expand their efforts to better understand the current capacity of licensed child care centers by age group, the current enrollment of child care programs, the quality of early childhood programs and services, and teacher qualifications and compensation with providers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the ECDS.

Delaware developed an online tool to merge the Office of Child Care Licensing, monitoring, and the revised QRIS verification system. This data collection system housed program monitoring documentation online and tracked QRIS verification visit communication between programs and those providing technical assistance. This program-level tool was combined with a new early childhood professional registry. All licensed early childhood professionals had an online profile to store employment credentials and connect them with employers. In addition to tracking registration and completion of college coursework and professional development, it housed professionals' goal-setting plans and portfolios of practice.

Improving the Quality of Early Care and Education Programs and Systems

The quality of the experiences that young children receive in ECE programs sets the foundation for healthy development and success in school as they grow. States and territories play a role in the quality of ECE programs and services through a variety of mechanisms—workforce supports, quality standards, program expansion, and sustainability being among the most common. Improving the quality of care involves the entire B-5 workforce in the ECE system, and states embarked on a number of strategies focused on quality improvement across ECE programs and settings, as discussed below.

Indiana reviewed all of their child care laws, regulations, and policies and recommended structural changes to reduce barriers and increase equity in order to serve more children in high-quality child care settings. As a result of these assessments, Indiana added additional professional development opportunities for the ECE workforce that included ECE professional development modules designed to support B-5 professionals on various topics. These topics included ethical practices, working with children in poverty, being appropriately attentive to culturally diverse populations, and motivational interviewing strategies that support the effective completion of comprehensive family assessments. These trainings were housed on an open platform that all professionals, parents, and community members could access at no cost.

Pennsylvania provided funding to institutions of higher education to align the knowledge, skills, and pedagogy required for the ECE workforce. They specifically designed courses to increase the capacity of ECE providers to better understand and work with state learning standards, infants and toddlers, children whose primary language is not English, children with disabilities, and those with challenging behaviors. Stackable credentials and articulation agreements were also designed to support the workforce in obtaining credentials and degrees.

Louisiana used PDG B-5 as a launching point to re-engage family child care providers who previously were not a part of early childhood community networks or the QRIS system. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in five regions of the state provide twice-monthly one-on-one coaching and technical assistance, as well as monthly network meetings and group training to 80 pilot participants. The pilot culminated in successful policy changes to allow family child care providers to opt into the QRIS system in 2022–2023, thus opening up the possibility of School Readiness Tax Credits and Child Care Assistance Program Bonus payments.

Nebraska piloted a model for providing business coaching and consultation to family child care providers and for supporting providers in gaining licensure. Northeast Community College provided a 10-week business training to 73 family child care providers across four Nebraska communities to support providers to improve and strengthen their business practices.

In **Alabama**, updated child care licensing standards required that children birth through age 5 spend at least 1 hour outside each day. As part of the PDG B-5 needs assessment, programs determined that most outdoor equipment was not appropriate for infants and toddlers due to a lack of adequate shade structures. Alabama used PDG B-5 funds to upgrade outdoor environments and purchase shade structures that met requirements for infants and toddlers, which improved the quality of these programs and expanded high-quality care options for families.

Expansion or Revision of Quality Standards

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) are a common method for states and territories to measure the quality of ECE programs, communicate about quality to families, and support continuous quality improvement efforts. The following examples highlight how recipients expanded or revised their quality standards to improve program quality.

Nebraska reviewed and revised the standards and indicators of their QRIS, Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), using a group composed of child care operators, owners/directors, family child care providers, Head Start representatives, public school preschool program specialists, higher education faculty, and other early childhood partners. The revisions updated the standards and indicators based on the current knowledge of the quality of ECE and made improvements to the process and experience of participating programs. The SUTQ steering committee reviewed and approved proposed changes for launch in 2023.

Virginia used PDG B-5 funds for the development of Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5), a statewide system of quality measurement and support for all publicly funded B-5 programs. These programs included school-based preschools, Head Start/Early Head Start, and child care and family child care homes receiving child care subsidies. VQB5 measured quality based on two nationally recognized quality indicators: interactions and curriculum in alignment with Virginia's early learning and development standards. VQB5 measured teacher–child interactions using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), a nationally validated observation measure.

Wyoming's needs assessment highlighted the lack of a statewide QRIS. In response to this finding, Wyoming used PDG B-5 funds to create and disseminate the *Coherent Path to Quality* framework for early childhood educators. This framework defined three dimensions of program quality: relationships and interactions, the emotional and physical environment, and learning experiences. The framework also provided strategies for improving practice.

Promoting Access to Consumer Education and Engagement

Consumer education and engagement practices often reduce barriers for families to accessing quality child care and early childhood services by providing trusted information to assist in decision-making. During the reporting period, states created webpages and resources to help inform families about ECE program quality, financial assistance, and public programs available to help families make informed choices.

Ohio developed a screening tool that allowed families to identify which programs their children may be eligible for and able to attend by entering important data elements into an online system. In the first year, more than 125,000 people accessed the tool.

The **U.S. Virgin Islands** developed fact sheets for parents with information about how to better navigate the ECE system in order to access high-quality ECE programs and services. One fact sheet provided information and resources to support families and caregivers with contacting agency offices, Head Start/Early Head Start, special education services, preschool providers, and medical assistance programs.

In **California**, the Health and Human Services Agency collaborated with the California Department of Social Services to develop the MyChildCare.ca.gov website, which provided information on currently open licensed child care providers, including location, health and safety details, ages of children served, capacity, and hours of care. Using the PDG B-5 funds, the two departments merged the MyChildCare.ca.gov website with MyChildCarePlan.org, the state's consumer education website, which provided quality ratings and other information on finding and selecting quality child care but lacked the real-time updates that the MyChildCare.ca.gov website offered.

Virginia supported local capacity to build connections among providers by providing user-friendly websites and other tools to inform family choice, coordinating enrollment processes to make it easier for families to apply, and facilitating a smooth transition into kindergarten, especially for children from economically disadvantaged families who could benefit from additional supports.

Montana established the Early Childhood and Family Support Division to centralize and coordinate key early childhood programs and funding within one division, thereby making it easier for families to identify and access needed services.

Wisconsin used text messaging to engage families around school readiness. Ready4K was a text message curriculum that supported healthy child development with actionable insights, research-based activities, and learning extensions for families with children from birth to Grade 8. Wisconsin used PDG B-5 support to engage more than 26,647 families with Ready4K. In Wisconsin, the texts were available in English, Spanish, Hmong, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, and Potawatomi. Survey results indicated that Ready4K increased families' confidence in their ability to support their children's learning and that Ready4K activities supported literacy skills. PDG B-5 also supported an innovative collaboration between Ready4K and the Forest County Potawatomi Tribal Nation. The Tribe worked with Ready4K to

create a custom set of messages adapted from Ready4K's trauma-informed curriculum that inserted words and phrases from the Potawatomi language to support children and families' familiarity and use of the Potawatomi language.

Providing Resources to Serve Children and Families

An important strategy in building, enhancing, and expanding an ECE system is for a state or territory to provide additional resources to early childhood providers to increase the supply and quality. States used PDG B-5 to engage families, support program and system-level changes, and expand data collection to increase participation in the existing resources of the ECE system. This section highlights examples of how recipients used resources to fund early childhood programs and enhance their ability to provide services for children and families.

Kansas used PDG B-5 funds for subgrants to encourage innovation among local early childhood programs and to enhance services for children and the families they serve. Subgrants fell into five categories: Child Care Access, Rural Child Care, Connect Families to Services, Kindergarten Readiness, and Improve Quality of Care. Strategies programs implemented with the Child Care Access subgrants included offering signing and/or retention bonuses to staff and making operational changes to offer nontraditional hours. Programs that received the Rural Child Care subgrants implemented similar innovative strategies and established partnerships with rural businesses to develop mechanisms to sustain child care programs.

South Carolina funded early child care education system navigators to work with families of young children to support their children's development and access the services the families needed. Two organizations were contracted to support the work. PASOs (a state advocacy organization serving Latino communities) hired and trained three community health workers to focus on three counties. In 1 year, more than 174 children were screened using the ASQ-3, resulting in 49 referrals for services.

Wyoming awarded infant-toddler grants to improve the state's supply and quality of infant and toddler care and education. Twenty-one applicants received grants of between \$5,976 and \$20,000, for a total of \$300,000 distributed. An analysis of the initial impact statements showed that most grantees used funds to support gross motor development (e.g., slide, tricycles, tummy time mats), and some were able to increase their class size and capacity.

Supporting Effective and Appropriate Transitions and School Readiness

Kindergarten represents a major transition for many children as they leave a preschool or child care to enter the K–12 system. The transitional period before kindergarten is also a critical point for a child's development and builds the foundation for future learning. States leverage PDG B-5 funds to engage in activities that support a smooth transition and improve relationships between early childhood programs. Activities that recognize family involvement, align developmentally appropriate practices and early learning standards, and encourage strong coordination among educators within the early childhood system are reflected in the sections below.

Improved Transitions

Research demonstrates the importance of transition activities on academic gains for low- and middle-income children. Seamless transitions into kindergarten are especially important in reducing disparities for children facing socioeconomic barriers, especially after disruptions in ECE during the pandemic. Many

grant recipients used PDG B-5 funding to implement professional development initiatives, encourage cross-agency collaboration and planning, and develop and disburse new resources to support seamless transitions. The following examples highlight how grant recipients supported smooth transitions from the ECE system to kindergarten using PDG B-5.

Florida used the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant to host Transition to Kindergarten (T2K) regional readiness leadership summits that provided professional development opportunities for public school educators and administrators and ECE staff. Participants received T2K Resource Kits that included resources on instruction related to early literacy in preschool and kindergarten classrooms to support smooth transitions as well access to the T2K Toolkit. The T2K Toolkit included resources on registration, customizable flyers to communicate with families on transition events, tip sheets for families, and sample forms and templates for interacting with and engaging families.

PDG B-5 supported **Colorado** in creating an extensive collection of resources and materials for professionals and families that supported smooth transitions between ECE and kindergarten. The state developed role-based transition resources for families in migrant and seasonal communities, Native American families, and families experiencing homelessness. Resources included a transition to kindergarten timeline and checklist and *Transitions to Kindergarten in Colorado: A Roadmap*. The road map identified eight strategies addressing state and local opportunities to improve cross-sectional collaboration to support transitions.

Washington combined information on current kindergarten transition practices from around the state with information gathered in the PDG B-5 needs assessment and identified the lack of family voice as a critical challenge to strengthening transition practices. In response, Washington began hosting a series of listening sessions to better engage families and understand their needs. The listening sessions resulted in the creation of three resources that were free and available to the public. The *Successes and Challenges of Early Learning Transitions in Washington* report and accompanying data brief served as a guide for any interested individual to think about their role in strengthening transitions. The *Effective Transition Approaches* guide offered strategies for communities to use when planning to improve transition processes and activities.

Alabama used their Initial Grant funding to develop a toolkit for families and local programs to ensure smooth ECE transitions for children and their families. The state used mental health consultants to work with school counselors, social workers, and school staff throughout the year to develop a plan for the transition to kindergarten and forward. With the addition of this plan, they had in place mental health supports available from pre-birth to elementary school.

Minnesota's Initial Grant supported the creation of a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit webpage that included three 5-minute videos about transitions targeting specific groups: families, early childhood educators, and schools. In addition, Minnesota created a white paper for practitioners about best practices in supporting kindergarten transitions and a parent brochure with information about enrolling children into kindergarten programs.

North Carolina's Initial Grant supported the creation of a Transitions Leadership Team and funded a transitions coordinator position to govern and manage statewide transition efforts. In addition, they supported 18 counties in developing and piloting community plans to implement pre-K to kindergarten transition practices.

Supporting and Measuring School Readiness

Improved transition activities are only one of many strategies that states are using to support school readiness. This section highlights examples of efforts to improve school readiness, both by directly improving programs and services and by measuring how ready children are to enter kindergarten.

Colorado created the PLAYbook as a school readiness guide for children birth through age 5 that included activities to support healthy child development and transitions to kindergarten. The PLAYbook was available online and printed in English, Spanish, Arabic, Burmese, and Somali. In partnership with the Colorado State Library and Office of Migrant Education, Colorado distributed 300 school readiness backpacks to families and migrant communities across the state. The backpacks included a copy of the PLAYbook and information on other services available to young children and their families.

Missouri used PDG B-5 to support the creation of statewide school readiness indicators and the initial implementation of a kindergarten entry assessment pilot project. The school readiness indicators set the foundation for the information that the state reviewed and analyzed in relation to how ready children were to enter kindergarten. When kindergarten teachers can quickly and effectively assess children as they start school, they will be able to provide proper instructional support in kindergarten. Missouri used PDG B-5 to start a pilot of the Kindergarten Observation Form. The schools could administer the form quickly (within the first few weeks of school), and it was aligned with other assessment tools schools may use, produced meaningful results that could inform a teacher’s instruction, and only required quick, no-cost training.

Reaching Underserved Populations

Historically underserved or disadvantaged populations often experience the most barriers to accessing ECE services. The following examples highlight how six states coordinated services to improve access for historically underserved populations.

To improve access to programs and services in Coosa County, a very rural county, **Alabama** used PDG B-5 funds, along with Head Start, United Way, and Department of Early Childhood Education funding, to establish the Talladega Clay Randolph Head Start K–12 Project (TCR B-12th). Coosa County did not have a county health department, so residents needed to travel to adjacent counties to access many services. Also, the county had only one child development center and two family child care providers. The TCR B-12th project, in collaboration with the local school system, provided high-quality child development services for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years as well as served pregnant women. High school students could be interns in the program and received credit toward a child development associate or ServSafe certificate.

With the help of PDG B-5 funding, the **California** Department of Education (CDE) built on its existing relationship with the Tribal Child Care Association of California (TCCAC). TCCAC worked with CDE to build its infrastructure for ECE programs by hiring staff, providing culturally and linguistically relevant professional development to their providers, and holding a virtual conference for tribes and partners across the state. Through this partnership, CDE gained knowledge of tribal needs, how the pandemic impacted tribal communities, and how historical trauma impacted tribal communities. As a result of meetings between TCCAC, the Child Care Resource Center, and the California Inclusion and Behavior Consultation Network, tribal members facilitated culturally relevant Parent Cafés in their communities. Parent Cafés provided parents an opportunity to come together to share their stories and experiences. One recipient of the state’s PDG B-5 funds noted that the “funds are critical in allowing us to support and

improve the early learning and care system and expand the reach of our QCC [Quality Counts California] funds beyond current child care participants, to ensure more equitable access is offered to providers at every level of the county's mixed delivery system.”

To better reach children and families experiencing homelessness, the PDG B-5 state team in **North Dakota** provided support to a multiple-agency grant-writing team that included the University System and local Youthworks agency working on a grant application to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Illinois leveraged PDG B-5 funds to develop a publicly available toolkit to support families with young children experiencing homelessness. This toolkit was used by social service providers and key ECE partners across the state, including the state's McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons and others.

Kansas held a community engagement listening session from migrant program leaders to discuss and identify opportunities and strategies to better support refugees through ECE programs and services. This initial community engagement listening session resulted in the inclusion of these migrant leaders in additional discussions and PDG B-5 strategic planning.

Puerto Rico used PDG B-5 funds to implement the 2 Generation (2 Gen) initiative adapted from the Aspen Institute of Colorado to increase access to services for children in poverty. The initiative coordinated existing services to address disparities in access and focused on child and family well-being by serving children and adults simultaneously. The 2 Gen centers provided comprehensive wellness services and worked to empower families to participate in the development of their children. The center addressed a variety of areas, such as mental health and wellness, including counseling, social-emotional wellness (e.g., toxic stress management), and early childhood education and child development (e.g., service coordination, referrals, developmental milestones, health, parenting, reducing child maltreatment).

Research and Evaluation

States used PDG B-5 funds to support research to address how states could enhance their ability to understand how children and families were using existing resources as well as gaps in access to those resources. The following examples highlight how four states conducted research to create recommendations and inform services to support ECE participation of children, families, and educators.

The Erikson Institute assisted **Illinois** in developing the Prenatal to Three Supplement to the *Illinois Risk and Reach* report. The Supplement provided a picture of the state's mixed-delivery system for the 450,000 infants and toddlers residing in Illinois. The report included state and county-level data on the eligibility and enrollment rates of infants and toddlers across multiple programs, including Child Care Assistance, Home Visiting, Early Intervention, and developmental screening. The Supplement sought to inform future efforts to build an integrated child data system and inform equitable service delivery for state policymakers.

Connecticut conducted a cost analysis of health and safety training for providers. This analysis supported the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood in designing a strategy that prioritized providers serving historically vulnerable children and families. In addition, Connecticut partnered with Third Sector to analyze the current fee structure for families with children in child care. Third Sector provided recommendations for alternative structure models, such as developing a shared fee structure between families and providers, to better meet the needs of families with low incomes.

Florida conducted a Mental Health Statewide Infrastructure Study to ensure adequate support to students, families, and educators needing mental health consultation. The evaluation focused on increasing support to infant/early childhood mental health providers and improving the state’s infant/early childhood mental health consultation systems. The recommendations developed from the study informed the expansion of mental health and social-emotional support across the state. Some examples included providing a social-emotional curriculum, increasing the number of children screened, and expanding the capacity of coaches to offer practice-based coaching on the Pyramid Model.

Program Performance Evaluation

ACF requires PDG B-5 recipients to develop a Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPEP) and conduct a program performance evaluation. Recipients must develop a plan that allows them to monitor progress toward their state’s or territory’s ECE strategic plan and program goals and objectives and to use the resulting information to inform continuous quality improvement. A well-designed PPEP is key to conducting a meaningful evaluation of PDG B-5 activities. PPEPs generally have several components, including evaluation questions, indicators and measures, and data sources. All recipients used their PPEP to evaluate the implementation of their grant activities, and some states also created PPEPs to determine the impact of PDG B-5 on the long-term outcomes of systems-building. Some recipients contracted with an external team such as a university or research organization to develop the PPEP and conduct the evaluation. Other states used internal evaluation staff within state or territory agencies. The following examples highlight how recipients designed and used their PPEPs.

Michigan’s PPEP included two levels of evaluation: evaluations of projects within PDG B-5 activities, and an evaluation of the overall impact of its PDG B-5 grant on the ECE system. For example, Michigan was interested in measuring collaboration in the ECE system. The research contractor designed a social network analysis to describe connections and collaborations among individuals from multiple organizations that were a part of Michigan’s B–5 mixed-delivery system. State government personnel and key stakeholders across the mixed-delivery system received an online survey that included a questionnaire on general collaboration contexts (benefits, shared goals, resources, barriers, communication, trust). Analyses of the collaborative culture survey items provided information that state leadership could use to improve collaboration in the ECE system.

Minnesota used PDG B-5 to work with a contractor and conduct an evaluation specific for tribal nations that honored the values, culture, and traditions of organizations serving Indigenous communities. This evaluation focused on the work with Indigenous communities to achieve a more coordinated system of support for young Indigenous children and their families. Researchers designed evaluation questions and data collection methods in collaboration with Indigenous communities to reflect a commitment to values, culture, and traditions. For example, to understand how Indigenous families were feeling about resources in the community, researchers combined state administrative data with community-based interactive data collection methods.

Many recipients used existing data systems as the source of information for their evaluation. For example, **Rhode Island** used its integrated data platform, Ecosystem, as the basis for program performance evaluation. The Ecosystem is a longitudinal data system that aggregates data from the Department of Human Services, Medicaid (including Early Intervention), the Department of Health, and other health and human service agencies within the state system. PDG B-5 supported Rhode Island in determining an initial set of metrics that aligned to the ECE strategic plan to serve as their primary PPEP.

New York designed its evaluation to assess the extent to which the PDG B-5 activities were implemented as planned. If they were not, the evaluation helped identify barriers to implementation by addressing four questions: (1) Are the activities being implemented as intended?; (2) Are the activities being accessed by the target population?; (3) What are the participants' reactions to the activities?; and (4) Do the activities align with the short- and long-term goals from the logic model? Question 4 helped New York ensure the PDG B-5 project remained committed to its defined goals and prevented project creep. New York evaluated all activities to determine if they were beginning (in the first 6 months of starting, with no data available), accelerating (implemented for at least a year, data is available), or striding (implemented for at least 1.5 years, PPEP data is available and used to address Question 1).

Georgia's internal research team conducted a number of internal evaluations in support of program improvement, including (a) measuring the number of trainings conducted by family ambassadors and then adjusting if there were areas of the state that were receiving fewer trainings and (b) monitoring progress on the Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsement to ensure that programs could earn the endorsement within the expected time frame. These efforts were complemented by research conducted by external evaluators, including (a) an evaluation of the Quality Rated Temporary Alternative Rating Options to understand the perception and feasibility of alternative routes to achieving star ratings and (b) an economic impact study of Georgia's early education industry to help understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery efforts.

Summary and Conclusion

PDG B-5 provided support to states to enhance their ECE systems in many ways during their Initial Grant and initial Renewal Grant funding periods. States reported that they were using existing resources more efficiently, improving coordination and delivery of services, serving more children and families, improving quality of programs, engaging families, establishing effective transitioning practices, improving data coordination and sharing, and implementing program evaluation. As this report demonstrates, PDG B-5 meaningfully supports state efforts to make progress in building a comprehensive ECE system designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

At the same time, PDG B-5 is limited in its reach. Funding to states and territories generally supports a pilot or initiative but is inadequate to support scaling up efforts. The cyclical nature of PDG funds also limits longer-term investments in the early childhood system. In the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency, there is enormous pressure on the early childhood system to address an ongoing workforce crisis and mental health challenges among children and early educators as well as additional need for early intervention. Prior to the pandemic, the early childhood system struggled with high early educator turnover and low wages, limited supply of programs in low-income communities, and high costs for families and waiting lists for publicly subsidized programs. Addressing these challenges so that parents can access a mixed-delivery system and supporting coordination across early childhood programs requires increased and sustained resources.

As a reminder, if interested in obtaining a fuller picture of each state's efforts and progress, visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/pdg-b5-grantee-reports>, where Initial Grant Final Reports and the first wave of Renewal Grant Annual Performance Progress Reports are located.

Note: The 2024 Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) Report to Congress will provide additional highlights from 2021–2022 state and territory Annual Performance Progress Reports.

Appendix A: PDG B-5 Grant Recipients

FY 2018–FY 2022

State/Territory	FY18 Initial Grant (N=46)	FY19 Renewal Grant (N=23)	FY19 Initial Grant (N=6)	FY20 Renewal Grant (N=5)
Alaska	X			
Alabama	X	X		
American Samoa				
Arizona	X			
Arkansas	X			
California	X	X		
Colorado	X	X		
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands			X	
Connecticut	X	X		
District of Columbia	X			
Delaware	X			
Florida	X	X		
Georgia	X	X		
Guam			X	X
Hawaii	X			
Idaho			X	X
Illinois	X	X		
Indiana	X			
Iowa	X			
Kansas	X	X		
Kentucky	X			
Louisiana	X	X		
Maine	X			
Maryland	X	X		
Massachusetts	X			
Michigan	X	X		
Minnesota	X	X		
Mississippi	X			
Missouri	X	X		
Montana	X			
Nebraska	X	X		
Nevada	X			
New Hampshire	X	X		
New Jersey	X	X		
New Mexico	X			
New York	X	X		
North Carolina	X	X		

State/Territory	FY18 Initial Grant (N=46)	FY19 Renewal Grant (N=23)	FY19 Initial Grant (N=6)	FY20 Renewal Grant (N=5)
North Dakota	X			
Ohio	X			
Oklahoma	X			
Oregon	X	X		
Pennsylvania	X			
Rhode Island	X	X		
Puerto Rico			X	X
South Carolina	X	X		
South Dakota				
Tennessee				
Texas	X			
Utah	X			
Vermont	X			
Virgin Islands	X			
Virginia	X	X		
Washington	X	X		
West Virginia				
Wisconsin			X	X
Wyoming			X	X