PDG B-5 FY2018 Initial Grant Consolidated Report

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Executive Summary

Recognizing the importance of the early years, the federal government invested in the Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 (PDG B-5) Initiative to allow states to strengthen their comprehensive early childhood care and education (ECCE) systems. The initial grants were awarded to 46 states to conduct needs assessments and develop strategic plans. The plans would determine in which activities states would invest 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.

The state needs assessments identified the gaps in services and the infrastructure that the state agencies and policymakers needed to develop or improve related to ECCE 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 pointed out the needs of early childhood professionals and programs, including expanded professional development efforts, improved compensation, and increasing the number of infant/toddler programs. Family access to ECCE programs, including home visiting, and services for children with special needs were found to be lacking. This brief outlines these and other needs identified by the state teams conducting the assessments.

Based on the findings of the needs assessments, states developed their strategic plans. Key initiatives were begun or improved by: 1) increasing collaboration and partnerships with existing and new local and state organizations and agencies; 2) blending and braiding funding streams; 3) improving policies and governance, as well as developing new legislation; 4) increasing parent knowledge, choice and meaningful engagement, including opportunities for parents in serve on boards and commissions; 5) addressing transitions into kindergarten; 6) improving the quality of ECCE programs by developing new materials and providing targeted professional development, coaching, and mentoring, and, 7) developing or improving their comprehensive data management systems to allow for data-informed decision making.

Following the highlights of the states’ plans in each of the areas described above, this report concludes with future state priorities, sustainability plans, and the difference the grant has made toward building comprehensive early childhood care and education systems to better serve young children, families, and the professionals who serve them.
Introduction

The Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) Initiative is a competitive, federal grant designed to help states strengthen their early care and education systems by improving partnerships, collaboration, and coordination among existing B-5 programs and services. With strengthened early care and education systems, states can use private, local, state, and federal funding and other resources more efficiently, increasing the quality of and access to care and services, and maximizing parental choice and meaningful family engagement. The PDG B-5 grant has enabled states to assess the pressing needs within their B-5 systems and invest strategically in infrastructure and initiatives that will strengthen their overall efficiency, effectiveness, and impact with a focus on services to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children for kindergarten and beyond. To ensure states receive the support needed to implement the activities of the grant, the PDG B-5 Technical Assistance Center (PDG B-5 TA Center) was established. The PDG B-5 TA Center provides states with the resources, supports, and technical assistance (TA) to help improve the states’ comprehensive early childhood care and education (ECCE) system.

In December 2018, 46 states1 were awarded PDG B-5 Initial Grant funds to conduct a comprehensive, state-level needs assessment and create a related strategic plan that optimized existing ECCE resources. Upon the approval of their needs assessment and strategic plan, states could then use the awarded funding to begin the implementation of their strategic plan. This Initial Grant Final Report Summary Report highlights some of the most common needs identified by the states, and related strategies in their strategic plans, along with other activities carried out during the initial grant period.

State Needs and Strategies Identified Through Needs Assessment

Prior to developing a strategic plan, states were required to complete a comprehensive ECCE systems needs assessment. Many states reported this was the first comprehensive needs assessment they ever conducted, or that one had not been conducted for many years. The vast majority of states’ needs assessments were led by 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.

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1 PDG B-5 funded states include the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories (referred to in this report as the “states”).
State Approaches to Conducting Their Needs Assessment

Most states held community listening sessions where parents, service providers, and other interested early childhood stakeholders provided input into the needs of families with young children. A few states facilitated some of their sessions in Spanish. It was reported that community meetings and focus groups resulted in receiving information from hundreds of ECCE providers, family members, policymakers, and advocates. In a few states, the number of stakeholders providing input reached over a 1,000.

Summary of State Needs

In the needs assessments of the states that received the initial PDG B-5 funding, the most common identified needs fit into 11 general categories: Program Quality, Alignment, Affordability, Access/Availability, Data, Workforce Development, Family Services, Communication, Home Visiting, Kindergarten Readiness/Transitions, and Suspension/Expulsion.

Table 1 outlines what the state teams reported as initiatives/supports needed by state agencies and policymakers to increase their effectiveness in supporting program personnel and families with young children. State needs are listed in descending order with those most frequently identified at the top of the list. The last two columns report the needs of ECCE programs and parents/families.

Table 1. Identified state needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Agencies/Policy Makers</th>
<th>Early Care and Education Programs &amp; Services</th>
<th>Parents/Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Quality</strong></td>
<td>Increase funding and resources; improve QRISs; decrease racial and ethnic disparities</td>
<td>Supports and funding needed to raise quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignment</strong></td>
<td>Align systems in all aspects (eliminate silos), including aligning funding sources, data, and professional development (PD)</td>
<td>Align funding requirements so braiding and blending funds is not so difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability</strong></td>
<td>Provide models and supports for sustainable business practices and operational effectiveness</td>
<td>Pay program staff higher wages and benefits for recruitment and retention</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access/Availability</strong></td>
<td>Work to eliminate child care deserts; increase programs in rural areas; increase inclusive practices</td>
<td>Provide more infant/toddler programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agencies/Policy Makers</td>
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<td>Parents/Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Build cross agency/program data system, including Head Start data; have reliable data on distinct count of children being served in programs</td>
<td>Support Head Start programs in getting data into state data systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
<td>Provide PD for college credit and develop system for higher compensation and benefits for the ECCE workforce</td>
<td>Provide PD on trauma-informed classrooms; business practices; inclusion practices; reduce barriers to teacher preparation programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Services</td>
<td>Increase programs for food, housing and transportation for families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Improve communication with providers and families; include parent voices on statewide committees, etc.</td>
<td>Improve communication and relationships with families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Visiting</td>
<td>Provide PD to increase the quality of home visiting programs; help inform families of the availability/benefits of home visiting programs</td>
<td>Increase home visiting programs, especially for at-risk mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Readiness and Transitions</td>
<td>Have statewide readiness tool</td>
<td>Support children and their families at all transition points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension/Expulsion</td>
<td>Develop policies to eliminate suspension and expulsion in ECCE programs</td>
<td>Provide mental health professionals to support the ECCE staff</td>
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**Strategies to Address Needs Assessment Findings**

The findings from states’ needs assessments led them to develop their strategic plans, which incorporated many of the identified needs listed above. As states finalized their planning, they began to develop new activities and initiatives and improve existing programs. The states’ initial grant final reports submitted to the federal government outlined the activities in each of the areas detailed below. With the exception of the impact caused by COVID-19 in slowing down the work, all states
reported success in moving forward with the initial or continuing development of building a better system for young children, families, and the professionals serving them.

**Collaboration and Partnerships**

All of the states reported previous collaborations among some agencies or organizations in the ECCE 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. The most common partnerships among agencies and programs prior to the PDG B-5 award included the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), State Child Care Licensing, Head Start, Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, State Home Visiting Programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C and Part B 619, and State Preschool (State PreK). Even among these programs, additional partnerships were established as PDG B-5 work advanced. For example, members from different organizations/agencies were added to advisory committees, became more involved as a key partner in at least one of the PDG B-5 activities, or hosted professional development sessions for early childhood providers.

The needs assessments identified 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 work were Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I), Tribal Organizations/Tribes, Mental Health Block Grant, Mental Health/Behavioral Health Services, Housing Authority, Refugee Organizations, Faith-Based Entities, Colleges and Universities, and Businesses.
Examples of PDG B-5 Team Members and New Partners Working Together

**Homelessness**

In **North Dakota**, the PDG B-5 state team was asked to provide a state representative to a multiple agency grant writing team that included the University System and local Youth Works agency, working on a grant application to serve homeless children and youth.

**Illinois** developed a publicly-available toolkit to support families experiencing homelessness, used by the state’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons and others.

**Refugee Organizations**

**Kansas** held a community engagement session with migrant program leaders. Although the Office of Refugee Services in **Utah** participated in the State Advisory Council in the past, their role was expanded through the deliberative sessions and feedback for the strategic plan.

**Housing Authority**

In **New Mexico**, the relationships between Housing Authority personnel and early childhood home visitors, case managers, and families were enhanced.

**Oklahoma** noted improved relationships with the Housing Authority personnel and their involvement in various PDG B-5 activities.

For more information on what states accomplished related to partnerships in the year or two following the initial grant, see the report *Strategic Partnerships in Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five Renewal Applications* (Meloy et al., 2021).

**Blending and Braiding Funds**

This report uses the following definitions for blending and braiding funds:

- Layering or blending and braiding multiple funding streams is a process for using multiple funding streams to support a common activity, initiative, or project.

- Blending refers to wrapping funds from two or more funding sources together to fund a specific part of a program or initiative. In blending, costs are not necessarily allocated and tracked by individual funding sources.

- When funds are braided, two or more funding sources are coordinated to support the total cost of a service. Revenues are allocated and expenditures tracked by different categories of funding sources. In braiding, cost-allocation methods are required to ensure that there is no duplicate funding of service costs and that each funding source is charged its fair share across the partners (Wallen & Hubbard, 2013).

States reported braiding or blending funds in the initial PDG B-5 funding year to accomplish two different objectives. Early childhood program directors were encouraged to blend or braid...
funding from different funding streams (Head Start, CCDF, Title I, Special Education) to provide services to children and their families within the same program.

In addition, some projects/activities blended funds to create professional development opportunities and other programming projects. The examples below are based on the state’s strategic plans that relate to how various projects can be accomplished by combining multiple funding sources.

**State Examples of Blending and Braiding**

**California** has actively expanded its quality improvement system, Quality Counts California (QCC), by allowing local QCC Consortia to combine First 5 California funds, CCDF quality improvement funds, and Proposition 98 education funding.

The **District of Columbia** blended PDG B-5 funds with local funding to lay the foundation of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) project, which will lead to better data collection and reporting across the mixed delivery system. Orchard, a multicomponent web-based system, is now sustainable due to PDG B-5 funding and funds awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture.

**Mississippi** braided private funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and public funds from match provided by state agencies to maximize the federal dollars from the PDG B-5 grant.

For information on funding strategies to sustain a mixed delivery system, listen to the webinar [Strategies for Approaching the Use of New Federal Funds to Sustain a Mixed Delivery System](PDG B-5 TA Center, 2021).

**Policy, Legislation, and Governance**

The states’ PDG B-5 initial grant work highlighted the need to improve early care and education systems and services within their states. To begin accomplishing these improvements, states created strategic plans responsive to the needs assessment findings. 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, preK, and two-generation initiatives. Other states conducted fiscal mapping to identify gaps and opportunities to prioritize funding.

States reported working on improving policies in multiple ways, including to:

- Establish a set of common measurable indicators for the data system
- Develop a statewide clearinghouse site for all state resources for children and families
- Fund Institutes of Higher Education to become accredited
• Improve retention and recruitment of the early childhood workforce by streamlining pathways to increased knowledge and employment opportunities
• Increase access to state-funded early childhood mental health consultation
• Develop a proposal for tax credits for an early childhood incentive program
• Establish a Children’s Cabinet Advisory Council with representatives including parents, center and family child care providers, and community organizations
• Decrease inconsistencies in policies in multiple agencies to better support the ECCE system
• Establish incentive payments to recruit new providers to serve children receiving child care assistance
• Provide changes in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to incentivize more culturally competent offerings for families with young children

State Examples of Improving Early Childhood Care and Education Policies

**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. Their governance model will be guided by the following principles: collaborative leadership, commitment to a mixed delivery model, inclusive and diverse engagement, focus on vulnerable population, alignment of funding with impact, and workforce advocacy and support.

The **Utah** legislature created the Governor’s Early Childhood Commission. The Commission will use the needs assessment and strategic plan to guide their goal of developing a coordinated and aligned B-5 system. The law also codified the state’s Early Childhood Utah Advisory Council.

**Vermont’s** PDG B-5 work will be housed in the Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Team which is a public-private partnership model. The membership will allow for input needed from stakeholders to move systems change forward in the Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan Committees.

**Parent Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement**

States identified a need to add parent voices at all levels in the ECCE system (program, community, and state) to make their needs known within each level, increase parent knowledge of the system, thereby helping parents make wiser choices, and improve their children’s access to high-quality early childhood care and education programs.
Early Childhood Care and Education System

Many states examined their early childhood care and education system with the goal of providing equitable access to children and families. The initial grant final reports suggested that state agencies worked toward strengthening partnerships with other agencies and improving their operational effectiveness. As states found gaps through their needs assessments, they turned their attention to building better ECCE program quality, access, and affordability.

State Examples of Strengthening ECCE Access

Ohio developed a screening tool that allowed families to enter important data elements to help determine which programs their children may be eligible to attend. In the first year, over 125,000 people accessed the tool.

The Virgin Islands developed fact sheets for parents with information about how to better navigate the ECCE system. One fact sheet covered information about how to contact agency offices, Head Start/Early Head Start, special education services, preschool providers, and medical assistance programs.

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 smoothly transition into kindergarten, especially those from economically disadvantaged families,

Montana established the Early Childhood and Family Support Division, which coordinates a large number of early childhood programs and their funding within one division, to make it easier for families to access the services they need.

Parent Involvement

States reported developing new partnerships to provide more resources and initiatives for parents/families. New materials were developed that could be used directly by parents via content on websites or text messaging services, often with translation features. In addition, some initiatives provided tools, training, and TA to ECCE program staff, coaches, school district personnel, and community stakeholders to better support parents and families. Common topics for the trainings included literacy strategies, social and emotional development, infant and toddler development, and transitions. States also designed leadership and advocacy programs to empower parents to advocate for their children and themselves.

To increase the likelihood that parents would have a voice in the decisions related to them and their children, several states have included parents on committees, boards, and cabinets to provide a forum for reciprocal communication and to respect parents as partners.
State Examples of Parent Inclusion

**Alaska** created many resources for families including: four books targeting rural families using their native language, activity guides, and videos related to early learning guidelines. They also created a marketing campaign about QRIS to help families become better consumers and 20 online family training modules.

**Michigan** piloted the Steps Initiative with families of infants and toddlers containing messages supporting their daily interactions, in age and developmentally appropriate ways. 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.

**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.

**New York** developed a statewide media campaign—Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing. This is a public awareness and action campaign that helps 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.

To learn how states increased family engagement in the years following the initial grant, review the brief *How State Leaders Can Promote Meaningful Family Engagement at the State and Program Level* (Peyton & deMonsabert, 2021).

Transmission to Kindergarten

States addressed improving transitions into kindergarten in a variety of ways, including funding activities focused on working with preschool teachers, families, and elementary school personnel. The PDG B-5 grant funded activities assisted the adults in developing materials that would aid in helping children make a healthy transition into kindergarten. Activities and materials included:

- Developing a child’s book, *My New School*, to be used by families and teachers
- Sponsoring summits/institutes for all partners to support transitions
- Developing online training modules in English and Spanish for families and providers
- Creating a partnership model for early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers
- Providing TA to early childhood teachers on developing individualized transition plans
- Developing a page on the state education website focused on children transitioning into public schools, including those children with special needs and English learners
- Providing data to school personnel on the needs of birth-to-five children via a kindergarten readiness assessment
State Examples of Activities and Materials to Support Children’s Transitions

**Alabama** developed a toolkit for families and local programs to ensure smooth ECCE 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 now have mental health supports available from pre-birth to elementary school.

**Minnesota** created a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit Webpage that includes 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** formed 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 preK to kindergarten transition practices.

Improving the Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education Systems

The ultimate goal of PDG B-5 is to support states to improve the quality of their early childhood care and education systems. Improving the quality of care involves all staff in the ECCE system and the activities and curriculum being provided.

Early Childhood Care and Education Providers

Many states revised documents and developed opportunities that support administrators, teachers, family child care providers, and coaches in improving the quality of early childhood programs. These updated materials and new activities are aimed at increasing the quality of programs for the children and families that are served in the states’ ECCE system. With funding from the PDG B-5 Initial Grant, State efforts included:

- Revising/updating the Early Learning and Development Standards/Guidelines
- Revising Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
- Updating Knowledge and Competency Frameworks with lenses of cultural responsiveness
- Revising Career Pathways documents
- Updating college coursework to align with improved standards
- Revising/Developing courses for EC professionals
- Developing collaborative Professional Development Networks
- Creating Communities of Practice for cohorts of early childhood professionals
State Examples to Improve Program Quality for Children and Families

**Colorado** updated their early childhood educator and administrator competencies regarding business practices in ECCE settings, serving vulnerable children, infant and toddler care, cultural competence, and social-emotional health.

**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.

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

Program Quality

States also worked on improving the quality of their early care and education programs by coordinating activities and supporting joint professional development across ECCE program types. Coordinating services allowed states to support more ECCE professionals, which in turn supports more children and families. The following examples of activities occurred in multiple states to increase the quality of programs in school districts, child care programs, and Head Start programs.

- Developed apprenticeship program-- requiring both coursework and apprenticeship placements
- Engaged in cross-sector continuous improvement processes
- Strengthened local collaboratives to build capacity including increasing racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of leadership
- Jointly sponsored training to increase competencies to serve children with disabilities or suspected delays
- Supported additional coaches to increase the number of programs moving up in quality ratings in their QRIS
- Included opportunities for leaders to improve their skills supporting teachers in their efforts to increase program quality
- Encouraged school districts, Head Start programs, and child care programs to partner by sharing curriculum, assessment, and training resources with one another
- Provided mental health consultation to coaches and their supervisors
- Increased the breadth and depth of communications with families regarding the state’s entire B-5 early childhood care and education system.
State Examples to Increase Program Quality

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/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 private child care, Head Start, and public preschool, as well as professional development and education and workforce retention and stability strategies. This framework will include 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.

Professional Development

As noted in the previous section, professional development (PD) permeates many parts of program quality. This section expands the notion of improving the quality of programs for the children and families served specifically via PD topics and systems changes. All staff in the ECCE system need high-quality PD that addresses their individual learning needs. The PDG B-5 initiative allowed states to develop and offer high-quality ongoing PD. There are multiple states engaged in the following activities to improve PD opportunities for early childhood teachers, directors and administrators, and family child care providers:

- Provide training in trauma-informed practices
- Increase the number of in-person and online PD in areas such as infant/early childhood mental health, classroom assessment, and classroom organization
- Increase the number of ECCE coaches to work with teachers and family child care providers on behavioral interventions
- Equip partners and child care providers with the tools to support children with developmental delays, disabilities, or special health care needs
- Build the capacity of providers to serve culturally and linguistically diverse children and families
- Provide statewide trainings on kindergarten entry assessments
- Offer webinars on supporting a smooth transition into preK and kindergarten, especially for children in vulnerable populations
**State Examples of PD Opportunities**

To improve efficiency, **Arizona** increased efforts to support a collaboration among the many training and technical assistance programs and agencies that provide PD. They developed a cross-sector collaborative Career and Professional Development Network to improve their overall PD 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 Early Years program.

**Florida** revised core competencies to reflect best practices and provided an essential framework for improving ECCE professional preparation. They 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. A total of 32 kindergarten teachers from 16 school districts participated in the professional development.

**Iowa** developed a state-level professional development system based on the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM) currently used in all Iowa preK-12 school districts. The system includes 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 evaluation.

**Using Data to Improve Strategic Planning**

PDG B-5 states strive to have a comprehensive data management system that links child-, family-, and program- level data across departments and systems. Many of the states have goals to create a cross-agency early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS) that will help inform funding and resource allocations, as well as policy recommendations. States reported working toward developing programs and policies by applying data-informed decisions via comprehensive data systems and processes.

Activities ranged from planning the integration of early childhood data into the state’s comprehensive data system to extracting data from the comprehensive system to support strategic planning and program evaluation.

The states in the earlier planning stages of developing a comprehensive data system stated that they are involved in the following types of activities:
• Implementing unique identifiers
• Linking the early childhood data to K-12 data and beyond
• Getting distinct counts of children being served in various programs
• Having a universal measure of kindergarten readiness across all programs
• Developing data sharing partnerships/agreements with non-state entities, such as Head Start and private child care programs that receive subsidies

State Examples of Data Use and Management

**Connecticut** developed a data inventory so that a team, including representatives from multiple departments, can establish a common understanding of how agency programs receive data requests, access program data, and fulfill 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** now requires a kindergarten entry assessment as children transition into kindergarten and beyond. They link data across child care and education settings as they build a more comprehensive data-sharing infrastructure for the state.

**Texas** began to explore the use of state agency data to fully understand the current capacity of licensed child care centers, quality of ECCE programs and services, and teacher qualifications and compensation.

For more on best practices in designing, implementing, and using data for an early childhood integrated data system, see *Selected Tips for Collecting, Reporting, and Using Data in Early Childhood Care and Education* (Frede et al., 2020).

**Looking Forward**

Through the PDG B-5 needs assessment and strategic planning processes, states identified the priorities needed to create and maintain a high-quality, effective ECCE system. Because states have multiple needs, sources of funding to support or expand these priorities continues to be a point of concern for many states especially those that did not receive PDG B-5 renewal grant funding.

Examples of state-identified priorities for future focus include continued improvements to and expansion of:

• Integrated data systems
• Social-emotional learning
• Staff retention (need for compensation)
• Developmental health (identify medical homes; screening and early identification, well baby visits, etc.)
• Transitions at all levels
• Business supports to help retain high-quality community-based child care programs
• Planning how to use new one-time federal funding opportunities without guaranteed long-term funding support
• Communication across departments for ECCE systems (at federal, state, and local levels)
• Adequate staff to oversee and manage PDG B-5 projects once the federal funding is gone
• Continuing TA for peer-to-peer learning
• Sustaining partnerships built across departments and agencies/organizations
• Expanding successful initiatives with additional funding

**Sustainability of Progress**

Using their newly developed early childhood strategic plan, most states created ways to continue at least some of the work developed and implemented with funding from the initial PDG B-5 grant award. States took advantage of the planning opportunity afforded them through PDG B-5 to sustain the expansion of or improvements to their ECCE system. More than half of the states reported that beyond PDG B-5 funding, the following activities and systems would be sustainable:

• Professional development opportunities and trainings that were developed during the funding year
• State early childhood standards development and implementation
• Activities related to stronger family engagement and parent leadership
• Early childhood integrated data systems and websites
• Stakeholder committees that support the work of the state's ECCE system
State Examples of Sustainable Activities

The District of Columbia braided PDG B-5 and local funding to complete the development of Orchard (multicomponent web-based system), which has expanded participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. It has also improved monitoring and TA, which resulted in sustainability without continued PDG B-5 funding.

Nevada will use non-federal funding to continue the following activities: Strategic Plan 2021; consumer education website; QRIS for Nevada Ready! PreK; Intensive TA; and Staffed child care networks.

South Carolina will ensure sustainability through the reallocation of CCDF quality dollars to support initiatives that demonstrated the most promise.

Georgia used initial grant funds to create the Family Ambassador Project, develop the Cost Modeling tool, and establish the Cross-Agency Council and Cross-Agency Family Council; all of these new projects will be continued beyond the grant and will support the state’s ECCE system.

For guidance and resources on sustainable financing, see the Early Childhood Finance Toolkit (Dichter et al., 2021).

Recommendations

States reported that they had many accomplishments toward building strong ECCE systems using the PDG B-5 initial grants. Following the intense work required to conduct a statewide early childhood needs assessment and strategic plan, which occurred during these Year-1 PDG B-5 planning grants, state leaders provided suggestions that may help them continue their progress. Each one of the following recommendations for additional supports and/or policy changes were made by several states as their work on ECCE systems continues.

Suggestions for U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education include:

- Develop a common definition of high quality
- Provide more support initiatives for infants and toddlers
- Encourage (or require) Head Start agencies to provide data to the ECIDS
- Align definitions and eligibility criteria, when possible, across programs to allow for coordinated enrollment for families (HHS and Education should model how Head Start, Child Care, Title I, Title III, IDEA—Parts C and B, Medicaid, etc. can work together more seamlessly)
- Develop a blueprint to support states in how to merge and consolidate early childhood programs to better meet the needs of young children and their families
• Conduct a review of federal requirements that are duplicative or conflicting that limit the coordination of programs

• Provide more time for systems work—3 years is often not enough time to change/improve most systems (5-year grants instead of 3-years)

• Coordinate requests for comprehensive needs assessments from the federal level—there should be one comprehensive needs assessment and strategic plan for early childhood that is inclusive of the needs of each of the funding streams and elements of the system

• Send all grant opportunity announcements not only to state departments, but also to the state advisory councils for a broader reach

• For inclusive classrooms, allow flexibility in federal funding that is targeted at children and families with the greatest needs to include children with special needs

• Provide states more money to support the ECCE workforce—professional development, college tuition, compensation, etc.

• Reward states with federal dollars for innovation and practices that meet core principles of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

• Provide software solutions to facilitate universal applications for federal human services and health services

• Sustain the focus on comprehensive early care and education systems building with new and ongoing federal grant opportunities

The Difference Realized Due to the PDG B-5 Grant

The PDG B-5 initial grant made a tremendous difference for states, especially in their efforts around statewide needs assessment, strategic planning, and the development and implementation of quality improvement initiatives. Many states indicated this was the first time their state had the opportunity and the funding to conduct an in-depth statewide needs assessment. 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. States indicated that the PDG B-5 funding bolstered improvements to the infrastructure of the state’s ECCE system. COVID-19 had drastic impacts on state ECCE systems. The pandemic required states to change from in-person to virtual events and trainings, often caused delays in starting and completing activities, required changes to regulations and policies, and sometimes delayed funding disbursements. In spite of the hardships caused by COVID-19, states adapted and made significant progress toward planning and building an improved ECCE system.

Many programs were able to improve services to families and children as well as create much needed professional development opportunities for ECCE staff. Most states also indicated that
the majority of the work accomplished through the PDG B-5 initiative could not have happened without this grant funding.

Examples of state progress made due to the PDG B-5 initial grant funding include:

- Conducting a comprehensive in-depth statewide needs assessment
- Engagement in comprehensive and in-depth strategic planning
- Improved systems alignment across state, local, and non-profit ECCE partners
- Creation or expansion of much needed ECCE initiatives/programs
- Reviewing and revising early childhood standards
- Creating or revising ECCE workforce standards and career pathways
- Developing stronger and more meaningful opportunities for family engagement practices and family members as leaders
- Expanding services to children experiencing homelessness
- Emphasizing ECCE social and emotional support, for both children and ECCE staff
- Completing in-depth ECCE program and initiative inventory at both statewide and local levels
- Exploring and expanding of ECIDS
- Creating publicly available informational websites targeting families and stakeholders
- Creating or expanding partnerships to better serve young children and their families
- Creating toolkits and other resources to support transitions across ECCE programs
- Formalizing shared governance structures to support ECE

States reported that they used the opportunity the PDG B-5 initiative afforded them to assess the needs within their birth through five systems, and they invested strategically in infrastructure and other initiatives. The states also indicated that they strengthened their overall efficiency, effectiveness, and impact with a focus on services designed to support children, families, and early childhood professionals.
References

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/early-childhood-finance-toolkit


