

Oklahoma Preschool Development Birth through Five (PDG B-5)

Renewal Grant Application

HHS-2022-ACF-OCC-TP-0180

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Project Summary

Project Title: Oklahoma Preschool Development Birth through Five Renewal Grant; OKPDG

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The State of Oklahoma proposes a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant project that builds upon the state's progress from its initial PDG B-5 funding and addresses the most pressing needs of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce, children, families, and communities, as defined by the state's Needs Assessment. A primary goal of the project is to support an ECCE system that provides children birth to age 5 equitable and seamless access to supports they need to thrive.

Oklahoma's PDG B-5 Renewal Grant project aims to build infrastructure, including early childhood data systems; enhance families' knowledge about the ECCE mixed delivery system and support their access to programs and resources; expand access to high-quality ECCE programs; support a qualified, well-compensated, and trained ECCE workforce; evaluate effectiveness of grant activities; and disseminate information and best practices to enhance awareness and participation in B-5 system improvements. These outcomes will be achieved by scaling, spreading, and enhancing research-based and promising programs while also investing in innovative pilots and initiatives.

The proposed activities in Oklahoma's PDG B-5 application are in response to findings revealed in the state's 2019 Needs Assessment, which showed gaps in access to high-quality ECCE programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; inconsistent knowledge of the B-5 mixed delivery system among families; a need for ECCE workforce training, particularly trauma-informed care; a need for more data about the ECCE workforce; and revealed differences about the needs of children and families in rural and tribal communities in Oklahoma. Proposed activities are also in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families, and the unprecedented ECCE workforce crisis in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) will serve as the prime recipient of PDG B-5 Renewal Grant funding. OKDHS will work in collaboration with Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) to implement grant activities that build upon the state's ongoing ECCE systems work. Together, and with families, ECCE programs, and partners, the state will advance quality, accessibility, and outcomes in its B-5 system. This proposal has the support of Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, as well as stakeholders and partners across the State of Oklahoma.

Total federal funds in the amount of \$12,000,000 are requested for Oklahoma's PDG B-5 Renewal Grant: \$4,800,000 in Base/Operating for recipient OKDHS and \$7,200,000 for subrecipient OPSR. OKDHS's total non-federal share contribution is \$3,999,191, exceeding the 30% grant match requirement.

Project Description

Expected Outcomes

The State of Oklahoma proposes a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant project that builds upon the state’s progress from its initial grant and addresses the most pressing needs of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce, children, families, and communities. The primary goal of Oklahoma’s PDG B-5 project is to support a coordinated, collaborative, and equitable ECCE system that builds the capacity of families, communities, and public and private organizations to provide children birth to age 5 with seamless access to supports they need to thrive. Bridging state and local initiatives, and engaging stakeholders and partners across sectors, Oklahoma’s PDG B-5 project is inclusive, ambitious, and well-positioned to enhance the state’s mixed delivery system.¹

Oklahoma’s PDG B-5 Renewal Grant project aims to build infrastructure, including early childhood data systems; enhance families’ knowledge about the ECCE mixed delivery system and support their access to programs and resources; expand access to high-quality ECCE programs; support a qualified, well-compensated, and trained ECCE workforce; evaluate effectiveness of grant activities; and disseminate information and best practices to enhance awareness and participation in B-5 system improvements. These outcomes will be achieved by scaling, spreading, and enhancing research-based and promising programs while also investing in innovative pilots and initiatives. Key milestones for the project period are described in Project Timeline and Milestones, while the Logic Model section provides a visual depiction of how the state’s inputs, activities, and outputs will lead to short- and long-term project outcomes.

¹ Oklahoma’s ECCE mixed delivery system includes 11 programs: Universal Pre-Kindergarten, Head Start/Early Head Start, AIAN Head Start/Early Head Start, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, Educare, Oklahoma child care, tribal child care, state-administered home visiting, tribal home visiting, IDEA Parts B and C, and Child Guidance.

Approach

Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) will serve as the prime recipient of PDG B-5 Renewal Grant funding. OKDHS will work in close collaboration with Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR), recipient of the state’s initial PDG funding, to implement grant activities that build upon the state’s ongoing ECCE systems work.² As a state agency providing a wide range of services to children and families, OKDHS serves a central role in Oklahoma’s ECCE system, as does OPSR, a quasi-governmental organization whose mission is to coordinate an early childhood system in Oklahoma that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school. Together, and with families, ECCE programs, and partners, the state will advance quality, accessibility, and outcomes in its B-5 system. This proposal has the support of Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, as well as stakeholders and partners across the State of Oklahoma. A letter from Governor Stitt designating OKDHS as the prime recipient of grant funding and a letter of support from Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) are provided in the Appendix.³

OKDHS and OPSR will engage the following state agency partners as the primary oversight committee of the PDG B-5 grant: OSDE, Oklahoma State Department of Health, OKDHS, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, and Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth. These groups will meet six times during 2023 as part of existing OPSR Partnership Board Meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to present information, engage in facilitated discussion, and make strategic decisions about service alignment and priorities.

² A Letter of Intent between OKDHS and OPSR is provided in the Third Party Agreements section.

³ OKDHS also received a letter of support from and Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY). Due to space limitations in the application, this letter is available upon request.

OKDHS and OPSR will engage a wide range of state and local partners and stakeholders from across Oklahoma, including “hard to reach” rural and tribal communities. PDG funding will support a Community and Tribal Relations Specialist to support community engagement efforts related to all grant activities and to help implement initiatives and programs described throughout this application. With a unique focus on tribal relations, this position will provide the specialized focus necessary for outreach to and support of Oklahoma’s diverse communities.

Activity One: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

Status of Oklahoma’s Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

Oklahoma’s Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) was conducted in 2019 in partnership with Urban Institute. Oklahoma’s Needs Assessment has served as an important tool to help identify opportunities and gaps in service delivery to young children, their families, and the ECCE workforce. The Needs Assessment provided a comprehensive look at strengths and needs in Oklahoma’s B-5 system and its communities, though the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are not captured in the report.

The 2019 Needs Assessment provides a template and format that the state can leverage for this and future updates. OKDHS will execute contracts to conduct a Needs Assessment update, an accompanying Workforce Study and an Expulsion/Suspension Study in Year 1. Oklahoma stakeholders and experts, such as Oklahoma Policy Institute, a non-partisan policy think tank and data leader, will be involved in the process to provide feedback (engagement described below).

Summary of State Efforts and Learnings to Date

Oklahoma’s 2019 Needs Assessment yielded rich information about the diversity of young children statewide and what they, their families, and the communities where they live need to support healthy development. The Needs Assessment identified more than 317,00 children birth

to age 5, approximately one-third of whom live in rural areas and may face significant economic need; it found 140,000 young children served by one of the state’s primary ECCE programs; and identified roughly 124,000 children statewide who are not yet served by an ECCE program. Approximately 6 percent of children are affiliated with four tribes: Cherokee Nation, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and Chickasaw Nation. The assessment also determined that unmet need varies between rural, urban, and tribal communities and is most pressing for infants and toddlers, families needing care during nontraditional hours (particularly in tribal communities), low-income and lower-middle-income families, and families with limited access to transportation (particularly in rural areas). Finally, the Needs Assessment identified ECCE programs that offer models for quality, affordability, collaboration with resource providers, and transition supports (Oklahoma Early Childhood Program, Educare, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships). It also found that more data on the ECCE workforce is needed to properly assess quality, with an emphasis on collecting data on teacher wages, turnover and workforce credentials and training, especially related to care of infants and toddlers.

Reflecting on findings from the 2019 Needs Assessment, OPSR and partners have identified a need for deeper engagement among families and communities, particularly in rural Oklahoma and tribal communities where needs are different than more densely populated areas of the state.

From a process perspective, OPSR learned through its early work on the PDG B-5 grant that the most effective efforts for systems development are integrated into existing processes and workstreams without being treated as an “add-on.” Given this, PDG B-5 activities, including the update to the Needs Assessment, will be integrated into existing efforts. This is particularly important given workforce and resource challenges (e.g., high turnover, retention, burnout) that impact agencies and programs widespread in the B-5 system.

Concurrent to Oklahoma’s initial PDG B-5 grant, and since that grant period has ended, the state has leveraged private funding streams to implement programs that have allowed the state to continue to learn about the needs of children and families and within the ECCE system. The following are a few of the most impactful steps taken since the grant period has ended.

Project HOPE, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and implemented by OPSR, initially focused on gathering stories about families’ experiences during pregnancy, birth, and their child’s first year (2019-2020). At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative dovetailed into a new project, Oklahoma Standard, that has collected nearly 400 stories from families regarding their experiences during the pandemic (2020-2021). The state learned the value in supplementing its Needs Assessment with new, timely, information gleaned directly from families; findings from Oklahoma Standard can be integrated into the Needs Assessment update. Additionally, in June 2022, OPSR held a Research Symposium on the impacts of the pandemic and how it has contributed to building resiliency and innovation in the face of adversity. The symposium focused on the ways innovations within Oklahoma have improved outcomes for children, families, and the ECCE workforce (e.g., recruitment and retention), while also exploring opportunities for improved supports and reinforcement of protective factors for families. Findings from this symposium have informed Oklahoma’s ongoing work and will add an important strengths-based element to Oklahoma’s Needs Assessment Update.

Many agencies and organizations across the state have continued to gather data, conduct local or program-specific needs assessments, and share research that will inform the state’s Needs Assessment Update. At the state level, creation of the Oklahoma Clearinghouse for Early Childhood Success (launched by OKDHS in 2020 and facilitated by OPSR), which serves as a repository for research and practice-based resources, will provide new and coordinated access to

data. Further, Oklahoma proposes a Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot, described in Activity Three, that will provide critical information about children and families' needs and access to ECCE programs to inform future updates.

Engagement of B-5 Partners and Stakeholders in Planning and Implementation

The engagement of B-5 partners, stakeholders, and families is foundational to Oklahoma conducting a Needs Assessment Update that is high-quality, comprehensive, and useful. The process for the 2019 Needs Assessment included eight family focus groups across the state and 11 Community Conversations with stakeholders, including direct outreach to tribal communities through Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association and other tribal partners. This was in addition to coordinating with partners for data collection, survey distribution, information sharing, and dissemination to ECCE providers and families. Researchers collected and analyzed data, performed analysis (e.g., cost, policy, governance, workforce), developed surveys, planned focus groups, and created story gathering processes. Community organizations facilitated collection of surveys, organized focus groups, and collected stories. Participating state agencies and leadership teams oversaw content development, provided data, and verified information.

OPSR will model its engagement of partners and stakeholders in the Needs Assessment Update after its successful engagement practices from the 2019 process; this includes planning, data collection, and analysis, as well as thought sharing and relationship building. Targeted outreach and customized approaches (e.g., Parent Cafés) will ensure widespread participation and engagement of programs in “hard to reach” areas of the state, particularly rural and tribal communities. Opportunities for engagement and information sharing will be culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible to families, with information available in English and Spanish, the primary languages spoken by Oklahoma families. Program-level staff will assist families

speaking languages other than English and Spanish, and provide translation support, as needed. OPSR will also ensure that the variety of engagement opportunities are inclusive of individuals with disabilities by providing alternative formats or supports, as needed.

Primary avenues for outreach to and engagement with families and the ECCE workforce will include the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) and its Parent Partnership Board⁴, designed for the purpose of leveraging family voice to help inform policy and program decisions affecting Oklahoma’s mixed delivery system; Oklahoma’s Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network, consisting of eight regions statewide; and Oklahoma Tribal Child Care Association. Further, described below, a cross-section of state agencies and partners will help to guide and provide oversight of the Needs Assessment Update, leveraging existing committees and networks to share information and gather feedback.

Planned Process for Needs Assessment Update

Oklahoma’s Needs Assessment Update will have a multi-pronged approach: 1) update existing data in the 2019 Needs Assessment to reveal trends and changing needs (e.g., incorporation of 2020 U.S. Census data); 2) incorporate new data that addresses the most pressing circumstances that have arisen since the 2019 assessment was conducted (e.g., impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECCE workforce challenges); and 3) conduct a Workforce Study and Expulsion/Suspension Study to accompany the Needs Assessment Update. The PDG project will also include development of a Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot (described in Activity Three), which will provide data to inform future Needs Assessment

⁴ The Parent Partnership Board includes, at a minimum, parent(s) with child with special needs; parent(s) with child impacted by criminal or juvenile justice system; parent(s) with child who has been in the custody of, or who have received services from, the OKDHS, Office of Juvenile Affairs, Oklahoma State Department of Health, or other child-serving entity including nonprofits; parent(s) with child who has received services including, but not limited to, home visiting, local county health department child guidance services, parenting support groups or education classes, TANF, SNAP, WIC, and SoonerCare.

updates and support coordination and collaboration among state entities to implement policies and programs that best support children, families, and the ECCE workforce.

The Project Timeline and Milestones section describes the key benchmarks and timeframes for completion of Activity One; it will be completed by the fourth quarter of Year 1. OKDHS will contract with an expert to lead the update and synthesize the state's existing Needs Assessment with updated and new data that will then inform action steps for the state's strategic plan to improve outcomes statewide. OKDHS will also execute contracts for completion of the accompanying Workforce Study, as well as an Expulsion/Suspension Study. Additionally, PDG funding will support a Fiscal and Policy Report to connect the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan (described in Activity Two) and an Oklahoma School Readiness Reach-by-Risk for each county in Oklahoma, which will describe local data and provide policymakers and stakeholders with current data on factors impacting children's school readiness and the reach and impact of services and programs that promote school readiness. A Needs Assessment Update Workgroup, consisting of staff from OKDHS and OPSR and partners, will work closely with the selected contractor(s) to guide the assessment work, monitor progress, and maintain special attention to family/parent voice, marginalized communities, and rural communities' unique needs.

Data gathering will include existing, recent needs assessments (e.g., CCR&R Quality Enhancement Initiative, assessing training and technical needs of the ECCE workforce; Autism Foundation's needs assessment for the neurodiverse population); research articles; U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data; Oklahoma state agency (e.g., Education, Health, Human Services) and program-specific reports; data on the quality and availability of ECCE programs; data from Oklahoma's CCR&R network; data from federal agencies (e.g., Education, Health and Human Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs); qualitative data from families and

providers gathered through surveys, focus groups, and interviews conducted across the state; surveys of key stakeholders in the ECCE mixed delivery system; and listening sessions.

When possible, data will be disaggregated by age group (infants, toddlers, preschoolers), community type (urban, suburban, rural, tribal), and other factors (e.g., poverty level).

While Oklahoma partners and stakeholders regularly collect and report data that will be leveraged in the Needs Assessment Update, data is presently siloed; this update will provide an opportunity to synthesize and share information that is integrated and comprehensive. The Dissemination Plan section describes how progress on and findings from the Needs Assessment Update will be shared within the ECCE system and cross sectors.

Approach to Assess Existing and Emerging Needs of ECCE Workforce

Understanding and addressing workforce challenges is a critical need across the B-5 system. Recent research conducted by Oklahoma State University showed the child care sector is in crisis, especially in rural Oklahoma and child care deserts; this challenge existed in the past but was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Low staff wages, lack of sufficient benefits, and limited opportunities for career advancement contribute to an unstable workforce. Oklahoma will use the Needs Assessment Update to understand more deeply the capacity, health, and well-being of the workforce in order to create a more stable, supported, ECCE sector.

More specifically, the workforce study component of Oklahoma's Needs Assessment Update will include: demographic information about the early childhood workforce and the ages of children served; wage and benefits data (by position and setting); information about the current qualification, degrees, training, and experience of the workforce; and a review of training programs and pathways to recruitment with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and other providers, as well as the accessibility of these programs. Information will also be gathered about

the how the workforce’s professional circumstances and personal needs have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will be implemented through strategies such as program and provider surveys, ECCE staff surveys, and review of credentialing data.

Activity Two: Update Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan

Plan to Update and Improve Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan

Oklahoma’s five-year Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) was conducted in 2019 with funding from the initial PDG B-5 grant. The state applied for PDG B-5 renewal funding in late 2019 to implement activities tied to the Strategic Plan, however the application was not funded. Oklahoma moved forward with strategic initiatives, though the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the state’s ability to make significant progress. During the pandemic and early recovery period, OKDHS, OPSR, and other agencies serving the ECCE sector focused primarily on responding to the evolving child care crisis. OKDHS and OPSR have the expertise and commitment to reinvigorate the state’s efforts to create a strategic plan that describes actionable opportunities for collaboration, partnership, and continuous improvement in the B-5 system and with priorities that can be executed with renewal funding and existing resources.

Further, due to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ECCE workforce challenges, it is essential that Oklahoma use findings from its Needs Assessment Update and accompanying studies (described in Activity One) to inform strategic planning efforts. Updates to the Strategic Plan will take place during Year 1 of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant and will be informed by the Needs Assessment Update.

OKDHS will contract with an agency to conduct the updates to the Strategic Plan and will provide project oversight. Modeling the update after the state’s initial strategic planning process, state-level administrators, policymakers, the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (OPSR

Partnership Board), expert workgroups, partners, programs, and families in communities across the state will be included. The purpose of the Strategic Plan Update will be to review and gather input on the current strategic plan to determine what remains relevant and needs continued focus, what parts need to be revised, what needs to be added, and how each of these pieces will compliment and align with other existing state strategic plans (e.g., OKDHS, Oklahoma State Department of Education Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)).

The foundational steps and stakeholders involved in the strategic plan update process will include the following. First, OKDHS will create a Strategic Plan Update Workgroup that will meet monthly, at a minimum, to collaborate with the contractor, ensure partners and stakeholders are appropriately engaged, assist in the achievement of project milestones, and review data to recommend discussion and input points for the OPSR Partnership Board. To maximize efficiency and coordination, the workgroup will be led by OKDHS and OPSR and will include program staff, representatives from the OCCY Parent Partnership Board, community representatives, and tribal partners. Second, quarterly meetings of the existing OPSR Partnership Board will provide an avenue for state partners to review incoming data from the Needs Assessment Update, provide strategic direction, and coordinate partner outreach. Third, at the direction of the OPSR Partnership Board, community outreach will take place following Board meetings. OKDHS and OPSR will leverage existing relationships with OCCY and its Parent Partnership Board to outreach to partners, community-based organizations, and families. Additionally, eight regional strategic planning meetings will be conducted, via the CCR&R network, in diverse communities across Oklahoma. OKDHS and OPSR will share information and seek input from community stakeholders in the mixed delivery system, parents/guardians, nonprofits, United Way, Institute for Child Advocacy, Oklahoma Policy Institute (Kids Count

grantee), and philanthropic organizations.

Finally, Oklahoma’s Strategic Plan Update will, at a minimum, include a focus on the following updates, which align to the priorities in the NOFO and build on key themes in the current Strategic Plan: new opportunities to respond to critical needs/challenges of the ECCE workforce (e.g., compensation and benefits, mental health and well-being, and professional development); plans to expand access to ECCE programs and services for eligible children through the mixed delivery system by expanding or supporting existing programs or establishing new programs, particularly in underserved communities; plans to make quality improvements to meet the needs of children and families in existing programs; and recommendations for new partnership opportunities to improve coordination, program quality, and service delivery.

Activity Two timeline and milestones are described in Project Timeline and Milestone.

Learnings to Date and Implications of Learning

Oklahoma’s original PDG Strategic Plan includes five goals to address urgent priorities. The following is a summary, by goal, of key accomplishments (non-exhaustive lists).

GOAL 1. Align Systems of Care to Produce More Seamless, High-Quality, and Cost-Effective Services for Families with Young Children: Completion of Oklahoma’s Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan were foundational to system alignment, providing data and a roadmap for improvement. OKDHS also completed a plan for an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS), including data governance. The Oklahoma Clearinghouse for Early Childhood Success was launched, which helps to improve systems coordination, maximize public-private partnerships, and serves as a repository for research and practice-based resources. And, the Oklahoma CCR&R merged with OPSR, expanding service coordination, reach, and communication with families, ECCE programs, and communities. Finally, Oklahoma held the 1st

Annual Early Childhood Transition Summit (June 2022) which brought together Head Start, SoonerStart (early intervention), child care directors and teachers, and public school staff to learn about planning for strong early childhood transitions.

GOAL 2. Secure Affordable, High-Quality Early Care and Education for Children from Birth to Age 3: A significant achievement for this goal was revision of Oklahoma’s Reaching for the Stars Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS). Changes included adding two levels (change to a five-star system), alignment with Head Start Program Performance Standards and pre-k quality standards, and identification of resources to support participation. The state has also learned from its support of Oklahoma grantees’ implementation of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants, which included the state’s allowance of layered funding (Early Head Start, subsidy), creating new workforce supports (stipends), and development of a model for a statewide infant/toddler coaching and specialist network.

GOAL 3. Boost Choices Families Have for Culturally Responsive Care and Services That Support Parents’ Ability to Work and Family Well-Being: In April 2020, Oklahoma began implementation of Pyramid Model⁵ training, conducted by OPSR, designed to help early childhood providers, families, and other professionals build skills for supporting nurturing and responsive caregiving, creating learning environments, providing targeted social-emotional skills, and supporting children with challenging behavior. The OPSR Board also established a Pyramid Model cross-sector State Leadership Team to achieve model goals, as well as help implement the Pyramid Model throughout Oklahoma by ensuring structures and resources (practitioner coaching, data systems, financial assistance, technical assistance) are available for

⁵ Pyramid Model is a positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) framework of evidence-based practices that uses systems-thinking and implementation science to ensure effective results. The model is used by more than 30 states and a dozen countries worldwide to promote positive social-emotional development in young children.

implementation across a variety of early childhood settings.

GOAL 4. Prioritize the Urgent Health and Mental Health Needs of Young Children and Their Families: Implementation of the Pyramid Model crosses goals 3 and 4. The Pyramid Model State Leadership Team supports coordination of best practices to support ECCE professionals in supporting children’s social-emotional development as the foundation to early learning and optimal development.

GOAL 5. Communicate Better with Families about How to Support Their Children’s Development and Well-Being: To better communicate with families, Oklahoma launched a messaging alignment campaign so that all programs and stakeholders would have the same message, tailored to their needs; and, alignment was designed to eliminate confusion, deepen understanding, and build confidence in information. In 2019, OPSR worked with agencies and programs to develop core messages that are now shared statewide. Additionally, OPSR contracted with an agency to research how rural families and programs, including in tribal communities, receive and perceive ECCE information, and how challenges like inconsistent information impact messaging. Takeaways from this study have informed, and will continue to inform, approaches to messaging in rural communities. Further, in May 2021, OPSR awarded Public Library Family Engagement renewal grants to 30 libraries statewide. Grantees are assisting to maximize parental choice and knowledge by providing parents with information about care and education programs for children birth to kindergarten. Also in 2021, OPSR awarded funding to Reach Out and Read Oklahoma to expand purchase of books and materials for distribution to families and children through health settings.

Cutting across all goals is progress related to ECCE workforce recruitment, compensation, and retention that is foundational to the B-5 system. A few examples include the launch of

OKDHS' Child Care Wage Supplement Program to provide professional development and longevity salary supplements to providers who work with young children in quality licensed child care programs. Participating teachers/providers receive a check every six months that requirements are met in their facility. Also, in June 2022, OKDHS and OPSR collaboratively launched Oklahoma Child Care Careers Care for Kids (Care for Kids), a centralized recruitment platform for positions in early childhood programs. Care for Kids includes suggested wage scales while promoting incentive bonuses offered by OKDHS. Finally, OKDHS has made progress increasing reimbursement rates for providers participating in the state subsidy program; starting in April 2022, and through July 2023, the daily subsidy rate is increased by \$5 per eligible child.

Through these accomplishments, Oklahoma learned that community engagement in policy change and local input is critical for meaningful change; parent/family input is needed for improvements to systems; ECCE provider voice is essential; and engagement of providers must be intentional. Successes also revealed opportunities for improvement, such as expanding networks of family support workers to reach vulnerable and rural communities and empowering local communities to coordinate service delivery. In addition, the pandemic revealed and amplified a need for ECCE workforce supports, particularly related to health and mental health.

There are many implications of these accomplishments and learnings. As illustrated throughout this application, PDG project will include intentional pathways for family and ECCE provider engagement and voice. It will leverage partnerships to the fullest extent, for example, the OCCY Parent Partnership Board, to engage families in policy decisions and the ECCE workforce in decisions that impact their working conditions and well-being. A comprehensive program performance evaluation plan (PPEP) with measurable indicators, progress toward the state's early childhood data system, and a continuous quality improvement (CQI) feedback loop

will make data available, usable, and will support accountability for all project activities.

As Oklahoma updates its Strategic Plan, there are opportunities to build on what was started and opportunities to pivot and re-evaluate paths forward. The primary challenges that prevented Oklahoma moving forward with some of the Strategic Plan activities included funding and the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating a focus on urgent needs. Despite these challenges, Oklahoma was able to move forward with key initiatives. Work that was started, but currently lacks funding and resources to fully implement, will become high priority for completion if renewal funds are awarded to OKDHS. The inability to complete projects, like the ECIDS, have prevented a level of data sharing and coordination that is essential for true systems integration. Additionally, Oklahoma has found substantial success and support in its implementation of the Pyramid Model through cross-sector, statewide coordinated efforts with investments from multiple agencies. This model will serve as a launching point for new collaboration, expanded training and supports to the ECCE workforce, and improving outcomes for children and families.

With consistent, committed leadership at OKDHS, OPSR, and partners and stakeholders, Oklahoma is positioned with strong cross-sector and public-private collaboration to continue to move ahead with updates to its Strategic Plan. This readiness extends to a commitment to implementation of integrated efforts that will improve the state's systems of care for children birth to age 5, ensure equitable access to high-quality learning environments, deepen family engagement, and respond to the ongoing and unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Activity Three: Maximize Parent and Family Engagement in the B-5 System

Approach to Increasing Parent and Family Knowledge About the State's Mixed Delivery System

Oklahoma's 2019 Needs Assessment found that the State's B-5 mixed delivery system is fragmented, funded through multiple sources, and that families are often served by more than

one program. Building and implementing a family engagement plan that ensures families are informed about and connected to services is a foundational element to successful B-5 systems change. The OCCY Parent Partnership Board will serve a critical role gathering information and facilitating outreach for successful implementation of family engagement strategies, as it will for representing parent voice in the state’s Needs Assessment Update and update to the state’s Strategic Plan (described in previous sections). The Parent Partnership Board was created as a mechanism for parents to advise state decision-makers on policies and programs, thereby helping to improve Oklahoma’s child-serving system.

PDG will support coordinated messaging to build families’ knowledge of the mixed delivery system, embed supports to reach families, and pilot activities to enhance coordination and efficiency within the system to benefit families. This includes the following components, which will maximize parent and family engagement and be integrated into the state’s mixed delivery system: *Public Awareness and Engagement Plan; Local-level Public Engagement and Awareness Campaigns; Family Support Specialists; Local-level Partnership Program; MIECHV Innovation Pilot; and Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot*. Each of these is described below. OKDHS will create a Family Engagement Implementation Team to guide and oversee this work. The team will include OKDHS and OPSR staff as well as parents, providers, community leaders from diverse communities across the state (e.g., rural, tribal), faith-based partners, tribal partners, as well as representatives of programs and initiatives (e.g., child welfare, home visiting). The Project Timeline and Milestones section describes the key benchmarks and timeframes for completion of Activity Three.

With renewal funding, OKDHS, in collaboration with OPSR and OCCY, will design and implement a *Public Awareness and Engagement Plan* (Engagement Plan). The plan will leverage

information learned from the state’s Needs Assessment Update, which will have embedded strategies to gather information from families (described in Activity One) and build on Goal 5 accomplishments in Oklahoma’s current Strategic Plan (described in Activity Two) to enhance communication with families statewide. A primary goal of the Engagement Plan is to identify touchpoints with families to learn about their experiences with program availability and quality, special education, community resources, as well as family support programs and opportunities for parent engagement in decision-making. Development of the Engagement Plan will involve state-level agencies and stakeholders as well as programs, partners, and families at the local level. This local piece will be the key to reaching families where they live, work, and interact with the ECCE system. Parent and family voice will be integral to development of the Engagement Plan, broadly, as well as in specific ways such as providing input on user experiences with state agency websites and accessibility of information (e.g., language, format).

After development of the statewide Engagement Plan, the state will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for communities to pilot *Local-level Public Engagement and Awareness Campaigns* that build upon statewide engagement strategies. Technical assistance and training will be provided to partners who are piloting the local campaigns. These campaigns will be launched and communities will be supported to modify their campaigns, as needed.

Family Support Specialists will be embedded in Oklahoma’s eight regional CCR&Rs, through existing contracts with local network providers. The primary role of Family Support Specialists will be to increase capacity of the CCR&R regions to work with ECCE programs, service providers, and other organizations to connect families to services. Family support services will take place through activities such as relationship-building, conducting intake, completing assessments, goal setting, creating individualized plans, referrals, assisting families

to overcome barriers to access services, follow-up, and monitoring receipt of services. Family Support Specialists will coordinate with other programs that provide support services locally (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start) and will establish new partnerships – formal and informal – with community providers for an integrated approach to supporting families.

A proposed *Local-level Partnership Program* will support local-state partnerships for the purpose of advancing local-level early childhood systems collaboration. This work will build upon findings from the updates to the state’s Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, align with the state’s public awareness and engagement campaign, and will address coordination of services, coordinated enrollment, transition support, and family outreach and engagement. The program will be piloted in three communities, including one tribal community. OCCY will design family engagement practices for local partnership and train the local partnerships on topics such as building family advisory councils. OPSR will support OKDHS’s implementation of this program with technical assistance, training, and monitoring and evaluation support.

OKDHS proposes to allocate funding to a *MIECHV Innovation Pilot*, implemented through a partnership with the Center for Child Abuse and Neglect at University of Oklahoma Health Science Center. A priority of this project is to integrate administrative data measuring social and structural determinants of health into home visiting data to better assess existing disparities, measure progress toward advancing health equity, and connect home visiting clients with knowledge of resources and referral to critical social supports. It will also help ECIDS development by identifying data-sharing strategies and developing approaches to identify and reach families who are historically unserved by home visiting. The Innovation Pilot is currently in place in four counties in Oklahoma (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Comanche, and Muskogee) and renewal funding will be used to advance the pilot by hiring additional program staff.

Finally, as part of Activity Three, OKDHS will implement a *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot*. OKDHS, along with the Oklahoma Office of Management Enterprise Services (OMES), is undergoing a massive digital transformation effort with a primary focus on technology that supports the Oklahoma resident first. The primary components of this effort include a single eligibility platform, an individual-focused data model, and an interagency data-sharing platform. OKDHS currently has two main external portals to access eligibility and provide status of benefit applications; one for SNAP, TANF, and child care subsidy applications, and one for child welfare and child support services. To unify the eligibility portals, OKDHS has adopted the Human Centered Design approach to software development, and creation of a streamlined portal is in process. Further, OKDHS is partnering with OMES and Google to develop an individual-focused data model to reduce the effects of siloed service delivery and improve intra-agency collaboration through data sharing. To ensure the integrity of the data is upheld, Google and OMES are assisting OKDHS in developing record matching and deduplication (elimination of redundant data) technology that can intelligently match records from a number of data sources and merge them into the central individual record.

Given these substantial advancements in the state's data system, OKDHS is well-positioned to implement the *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot* for families enrolling children in ECCE programs in the mixed delivery system. The pilot will be developed by OKDHS, with support from OPSR, and implemented with input and guidance from families. Families will be involved in digital transformation efforts, helping to design and test the user experience. Coordinated application, eligibility, and enrollment will allow Oklahoma, regions, and communities to connect between programs and across service sectors through common processes for the recruitment of families, application for services, eligibility

determination, matching families with programs, and enrollment of children and families into programs and services. The primary goal of the pilot is to create seamless access to services within the mixed delivery system while also increasing families' knowledge of and access to other community resources, especially social safety net programs, for which they are eligible. This pilot will move the state forward on accomplishing a high-priority component of the state's developing ECIDS. Pilot planning and design will begin in Year 2, with the pilot launched in the three communities that will be participating in the *Local-Level Partnership Program* in Year 3. Evaluation of the pilot will inform spread and scale following the PDG project period.

Active Partnerships to Ensure All Families Are Informed and Connected to Other Resources

OCCY will train state and local organizations on the value of parent voice, how to strengthen parent voice in their own programs, and best practices for family engagement to ensure they know about and can access the resources they need to support their children's development. Training will equip programs with strategies to share information with families about the supports available in their community (e.g., health, mental health, employment, education) and how to access them. Training will also include a focus on eliciting and responding to unique needs of families, such as families with limited English proficiency, families who have a child with a disability, or vulnerable families (e.g., experiencing homelessness).

Further, OPSR maintains active partnerships with programs and service providers across the state, and OKDHS houses child welfare, TANF, and SNAP, for example. These partnerships will be leveraged through PDG projects, and particularly the Local-level Partnership Program, to support ECCE providers to connect families with needed services (e.g., housing, food).

To help ensure families are connected with health services and resources to support their children's development, PDG will fund *Reach Out and Read (ROR) Partnership with Head*

Start/Early Head Start (through a contract with ROR). This project will support expansion and high-quality implementation of ROR in medical clinics in Stillwater, Enid, and Blanchard (rural communities) and through partnerships with local Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) programs. The estimated reach in Year 1 is 7,600 children birth to age 5 from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, the majority of whom participate in SoonerCare (Oklahoma Medicaid). Children enrolled in HS/EHS will access regular health care, and families will receive guidance and resources about parent-child interactions that will lead to improved social-emotional well-being. Upon successful completion of this project in Year 1, it is anticipated that ROR will be extended to additional rural community partners in subsequent years.

Plan to Elicit and Respond to Family Concerns, including Disabilities

Oklahoma's approach to reach families will be rooted in local-level systems work that meets families where they are as opposed to a top-down approach from state agencies. Using existing networks, such as the CCR&R network, will ensure broad geographic reach as well as equitable access to information, provided in ways that are consistent with families' culture and language. CCR&R Resource Specialists, who regularly communicate with families at the local level, will provide important input about strategies to reach families and adapt approaches depending on how families need and want information. This approach will also allow families' concerns to be elicited and responses to be consistent and coordinated at a local level, with learnings shared with state partners for continuous improvement of the state's family engagement work.

Oklahoma's implementation of *Developmental Monitoring Resources and Support for Early Care and Learning Providers*, described in Activity Four, will help ECCE providers support families who have concerns about their child's development, are aware of an existing disability or delay, or whose children are at risk for developmental delays, and connect those families with

resources. *Exceptional Needs Reimbursement Grant, Special Populations – Existing Programs*, described in Activity Six, will also help to increase access to high-quality, inclusive programs.

Efforts to Improve Family Engagement and Leadership in Improving the State’s ECCE System

Oklahoma is the first state in the nation to have a Parent Partnership Board in state statute. OCCY’s Parent Partnership Board, described above, is an example of meaningful family engagement to improve or develop state policies and practices that drive the ECCE system. The Parent Partnership Board brings together local and state collaboration, with family voice helping to inform policy and program decisions affecting Oklahoma’s mixed delivery system. The Parent Partnership Board will provide opportunities for state leaders to learn from families about what information they need and want to know, at what frequency, and in what format as well as how they prefer to be engaged in their children’s care and education. In addition to partaking in regularly scheduled Parent Partnership Board meetings, members also sit on other state agency or organization boards to provide parent voice; this allows the Parent Partnership Board to serve as a “hub” for connecting boards and councils statewide. OCCY also promotes training and resources through advisory groups to help strengthen family voice and grow leadership capacity.

Additionally, as described above, Oklahoma will implement a *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot*. Families will be active participants in the pilot, which has significant implications for strengthening the state’s B-5 mixed delivery system.

Activity Four: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices

In Oklahoma, a wide range of professional development opportunities are available. Described above, the state has made progress with implementation of Pyramid Model (training and coaching), the introduction of a Transition Summit, and numerous opportunities for professional development, training, and coursework. Renewal funding will expand many of these

opportunities through an approach that leverages the expertise and experience of partners statewide. Specific proposed activities are described below. OKDHS will create a Workforce Implementation Team to guide and oversee this work. The team will include state agency leadership team members and staff, programs and services staff from the mixed delivery system, institutes of higher education, professional development providers, and tribal representatives.

Project Timeline and Milestones describes benchmarks and timeframes for Activity Four.

Efforts to Improve the Training and Expertise of Oklahoma’s B-5 ECCE Workers

To help improve the ECCE workforce’s ability to attain competencies needed to demonstrate necessary knowledge and skills – and to evaluate those competencies – Oklahoma will build upon the *Oklahoma Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners*, the *Directors Guide to Oklahoma’s Core Competencies*, and the state’s QRIS. Activity Four will include four primary activities: *Pyramid Model Implementation with OEPC and Licensed Child Care; Transition Summit; Developmental Monitoring Resources and Support for Early Care and Learning Providers; and Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.*

Currently, Pyramid Model training is available for free online for child care and Head Start teachers. Onsite practice-based coaching is also available to ECCE programs through the state’s regional CCR&Rs. Renewal funding will support *Pyramid Model Implementation with OECP and Licensed Child Care* and target 80 implementation sites. This will include 50 centers and family child care homes, including HS/EHS. It will also include 30 Oklahoma Early Childhood Program (OECP)⁶ sites where OSDE is funding 64 teachers’ salaries. These programs will be primarily located in Tulsa County. Funding will be used to add 25-30 high-quality Pyramid

⁶ The OECP provides the fiscal structure to align Oklahoma State Department of Education and private resources to promote high-quality standards tied to minimum teacher qualifications, ongoing professional development, and parent supports designed to foster low-income families’ independence and economic success.

Model trainers and coaches statewide (Oklahoma’s current implementation of Pyramid Model is described in Activity Two). These trainers and coaches will help to build the capacity of the ECCE workforce by supporting high-fidelity program-wide/community-wide implementation sites. The project will also partner with families to enhance skills and strategies to support their children, increase children’s pro-social skills, and reduce challenging behavior to prevent and severely limit expulsion and suspension in early childhood settings.

Oklahoma’s expansion of Pyramid Model training is foundational for supporting the workforce to meet children’s needs and to improve outcomes for children, essential elements in Oklahoma’s current Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. The Pyramid Model framework emphasizes strong relationships, support for social competence, and the prevention of challenging behaviors; it will create a cohesive approach to addressing needs of children with challenging behaviors and special needs that is aligned with Oklahoma’s early learning standards. Recognizing the deep impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and needs that existed pre-pandemic, supporting the ECCE workforce to apply trauma-informed approaches to address adverse experiences is essential. Pyramid Model training will help to address this need as well as build the capacity of the workforce to implement inclusion strategies for children with or at risk for disabilities and delays and adopt supports to limit suspension and expulsion.

Further, OKDHS will build upon the successful implementation of the state’s 1st Annual Early Childhood Transition Summit (June 2022), which brought together Head Start, SoonerStart (early intervention), child care directors and teachers, and public school staff to learn about planning for strong early childhood transitions. The summit was launched in response to findings from the 2019 Needs Assessment, which showed that additional transition supports are needed to ensure that all families, along with the workforces in ECCE and elementary education, are

prepared to support children’s transitions. PDG funding will be used to improve and implement a *Transition Summit* that extends to rural communities across the state. The Transition Summit will take place in summer 2023 in each of the state’s eight CCR&R regions, bringing together Transition Teams from across the state. Participants will earn CEUs for the Transition Summit.

PDG funding for Activity Four will also support expansion of *Developmental Monitoring Resources and Support for Early Care and Learning Providers*, implemented by University of Oklahoma Health Science Center (OUHSC) and Oklahoma Autism Center. This program aims to improve outcomes for children by providing training and support on developmental monitoring for ECCE providers and increase provider awareness and knowledge regarding the importance of developmental monitoring and what to do if concerns are identified. OUHSC and Oklahoma Autism Center are currently implementing this initiative in Head Start and home visiting; PDG funding will allow expansion to child care providers and will support shared language about developmental monitoring within the B-5 mixed delivery system. This expansion will include tribal communities, as OUHSC is currently working with Southern Plains Tribal Health Board to adapt materials to be culturally relevant for tribal communities.

Developmental Monitoring Resources and Support for Early Care and Learning Providers will be implemented through a broad informational campaign to promote knowledge and awareness as well as targeted support and technical assistance to providers. ECCE programs will receive training on how to incorporate developmental monitoring into program policies and procedures. Best practice training will build upon the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) health education program “Learn the Signs. Act Early (LTSAE).”

Finally, renewal funding will support statewide expansion of *Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation* through the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS). IECMH is currently in place but is in dire need of infrastructure to support program fidelity. This project will support more seamless, high-quality, cost-effective, services for families with young children, as well as address their urgent health and mental health needs. It will also help ECCE providers to apply trauma-informed approaches to address children's needs. This will be achieved through a blend of eight full-time regional consultants and a fee-for-service delivery structure that is tied to centralized training hubs. The regional positions will serve as mentors for programs and will increase access to mental health consultation. These positions will support fee-for-service consultants who provide consultation part time as one of the duties of their job. An evaluation of service effectiveness will take place to help inform sustainability and expansion of the initiative. The anticipated reach of this initiative is 45 ECCE programs annually (impacting approximately 2,200 children) served by regional consultants and 110 ECCE programs annually (impacting approximately 5,700 children) served through fee-for-service.

Initiatives and programs described in Activity Five will also help to support the training and expertise of the B-5 workforce and disseminate best practices across the mixed delivery system.

Pathways for Attaining Aligned Credentials, Certifications, and Coursework

Oklahoma's Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD) oversees the state's Professional Development Ladder. The Ladder reflects formal job-related education and credentials gained through universities, 2-year colleges, technology centers, credentialing bodies, and Oklahoma Professional Development Registry approved training sponsors. The Ladder is a tool for tracking and advancing professional development that aligns with the state's QRIS.

Additionally, Oklahoma's Scholars for Excellence in Child Care Program awards scholarships to eligible child care professionals to complete coursework in the area of child

development or early childhood education. This scholarship enables child care teachers/providers to improve their skills through education, and continue the availability of quality child care in local communities. This scholarship is a partnership between the teacher/family child care provider, child care center, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and OKDHS. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education administers the scholarship program that helps students pay for tuition and books. There are Scholar coordinators at Oklahoma community colleges to recruit child care professionals who would not attend college without this additional assistance. The coordinator assists and supports child care teachers seeking a credential, certificate, or associate's degree in early childhood education.

Oklahoma has taken significant steps since its initial PDG funding to implement strategies to enhance linguistic and culturally supportive pathways for credentials, certifications, and coursework. The state is offering scholarships for a CDA course in Spanish. This 120-hour course uses the Quorum platform, which makes learning modules and support available online. The program connects to the Oklahoma Professional Development Registry, is supported by the state's CCR&R Network, and fills a critical gap in access to linguistically diverse training that is available statewide. Information-sharing through PDG may help to promote this scholarship.

The state is also in the process of updating the its Pathway curriculum to include a Spanish version, as well as purchased licenses for Pyramid Model training in Spanish. Making resources available in Spanish is essential to reach and serve Oklahoma's children and families, as the 2019 Needs Assessment found more than 40,000 young children who speak Spanish at home and recommended that resources for families should be culturally supportive.

As noted in Activity Two, OKDHS and OPSR collaboratively launched Oklahoma Child Care Careers Care for Kids (Care for Kids), a centralized recruitment platform for positions in

early childhood programs. Care for Kids includes a feature that translates the contents into Spanish as well as other languages.

Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

The aforementioned Care for Kids has been an important step toward streamlined recruitment, hiring, and compensation of the ECCE workforce. Care for Kids will be promoted through public awareness and engagement campaigns (Activity Three) statewide and locally. Retention efforts have focused largely on ensuring the workforce is trained to meet children and families' needs, while also addressing ECCE providers' needs. Renewal funding will continue to grow these efforts, described in Activity Three and Activity Four.

In addition, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding supported sustainability of ECCE programs during the COVID-19 pandemic and has allowed for access to high-quality programs for families in need. Renewal funding (described in Activity Six) will sustain ARPA-funded efforts that are currently expanding access in child care deserts, located in Oklahoma's many rural communities. Sustaining investment in these ECCE programs will support workforce stability and maintain increased availability of qualified providers. The need for increased access to high-quality services in Oklahoma's child care deserts and rural communities was found to be most dire in the state's 2019 Needs Assessment; continuing to invest in these communities will support continuity of care and improved outcomes for enrolled children.

To support recruitment, compensation, and retention of the ECCE workforce, Oklahoma began offering categorical eligibility for child care subsidy to children of child care workers. This initiative is scheduled to end June 30, 2023. PDG funding, *Child Care Provider Benefits, Categorical Eligibility for Subsidized Child Care, Telemedicine, and Telehealth*, will be used to extend categorical eligibility for subsidized child care to the ECCE workforce in the three *Local-*

level Partnership Program pilot communities beyond June 2023 (Year 1). This benefit will be offered in conjunction with telemedicine and teletherapy supports through Oklahoma Shared Services to help address the health/mental health needs of the workforce. The state will evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot to expand it to additional communities in Years 2 and 3.

Activity Five: Support Program Quality Improvement

Strategies to Support the Quality of Early Childhood Settings

Proposed efforts to support the quality of early childhood settings in Oklahoma will include *Part C Data Equity Specialization* and *Early Learning Inventory (ELI) Expansion Project*. OKDHS will create a Quality Implementation Team to guide and oversee this work. This team will include OPSR, OPSR Board members (SAC), and evaluation and data staff from ECCE programs and services statewide. The Project Timeline and Milestones section describes the key benchmarks and timeframes for completion of Activity Five.

Renewal funding will support *Part C Data Equity Specialization*, through a partnership with SoonerStart, the state’s early intervention provider. Funding will allow SoonerStart to conduct new data analysis, with an intentional focus on equity to ensure that the children who will benefit from SoonerStart are identified and receive services; this will take place during Year 1 through Year 3. A SoonerStart staff member will engage in local planning and will participate in PDG teams and workgroups to share information learned and provide guidance on use of data. The use of Part C data is essential for meeting the needs of children with disabilities and their families and supporting positive outcomes. This project will allow the state to review data for the purpose of identifying inequities and root causes and using them to inform solutions that will ultimately improve ECCE programs’ ability to equitably identify and serve children with disabilities.

A significant investment in improving program quality will be Oklahoma’s *Early Learning*

Inventory (ELI) Expansion Project, which will allow Oklahoma to collect data on kindergarten readiness and better inform local and state policies regarding early childhood education.

Beginning in summer 2021, OSDE gave kindergarten and first-grade teachers access to an online training module. The training covers best practices in observational formative assessments and how to use the Oklahoma ELI rubric and data dashboard to plan for instruction and communicate student progress with families. With renewal funding, training and support will extend to school districts willing to implement pre-k and kindergarten ELIs.

In Year 1 of the *Early Learning Inventory (ELI) Expansion Project*, OSDE will identify school districts, provide training to teachers on use of the tool, and provide instructional coaching to assist teachers in addressing the learning needs of students. Participating districts will receive funds for classroom materials, and data submitted by school districts will be available for state-level analysis. In Year 2, a vendor will be contracted to develop a platform for the ELI that allows data entry and report development by child care and Head Start partners, as the current platform is limited to use by public schools. Additional school districts and programs will participate in the pilot in Years 2 and 3. By the end of Year 3, more than 150 sites will be utilizing the pre-k and kindergarten ELIs.

Statewide Quality Improvement Efforts

Oklahoma's 2019 Needs Assessment found that approximately 50% of programs participating in the state's QRIS are rated one star, the minimum level, which is meeting licensing requirements; and, consistent and adequate support is needed for improvement of ECCE program quality. Further, Oklahoma's 2019 Strategic Plan reported that a thorough revision to the state's QRIS and its quality levels was needed. Since then, OKDHS led the statewide process to revise the QRIS (described in Activity Two). In June 2022, applications

opened for ECCE programs to transition to the new system, and the new system will become effective on January 1, 2023. This positions Oklahoma to leverage momentum and invest in supports that will help ECCE programs to implement high-quality services for children.

The activities described in this section, as well as those in Activity Three and Activity Four, are designed to support program quality improvement. Oklahoma’s approach to PDG is capacity building at the state and local level that will lead to a high-quality, sustainable B-5 system.

Activity Six: Subgrants to Enhance Quality and Expand Access to Existing & New Programs

Planned Subgranting Activities

Subgrant Option A: As part of Subgrant Option A, OKDHS will administer *Child Care Desert Grants – Existing Programs*, as well as *Exceptional Needs Reimbursement Grant, Special Population – Existing Programs*.

Child Care Desert Grants – Existing Programs will be available for existing ECCE programs in identified child care deserts, 34 of Oklahoma’s 77 counties, that are interested in expanding their capacity to serve children. Currently, this grant program is funded through ARPA. It will continue to be funded by ARPA in Year 1 of PDG. After Year 1, ARPA funding will end, and PDG funding will continue and expand this grant program.

Programs requesting a Child Care Desert Grant must be participating in the state’s subsidy program as well as QRIS; this will help to ensure access is expanded in ways that will serve low-income children and funded program slots are high-quality based on Oklahoma’s early learning standards. Child care licensing specialists monitor programs for compliance with licensing regulations, and Stars Outreach Specialists at OKDHS monitor compliance with quality standards. This current grant program will be open until July 31, 2023 or until allocated funds have been expended. Payments will be provided in a two-step process: \$5,000 for each slot in the

ECCE program that has increased capacity, then \$5,000 per enrolled child in those slots after a 12-month period. OKDHS plans to expand this grant opportunity of \$5,000 per enrolled child for up to 400 new children in years 2024 and 2025.

Exceptional Needs Reimbursement Grant, Special Populations – Existing Programs is for licensed programs to increase the availability of quality child care for children with special needs. The intent is to equip child care providers with reimbursement for items that allow them to serve children with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities or children with extraordinary needs. Currently, this grant program is funded through ARPA. It will continue to be funded by ARPA in Year 1 of PDG. After Year 1, ARPA funding will end, and PDG funding will continue and expand this grant program.

This grant will fund purchases such as, but not limited to, adapted vehicles, motor skills equipment, sensory equipment, positioning equipment, communication devices, adapted equipment for mealtime, and adapted equipment for indoor and outdoor recreation. Grant funds will be awarded at the facility-level and will be available until July 2024 or until allocated funds have been expended. OKDHS plans to extend financial support to programs that receive funding from this grant opportunity by offering \$5,000 per enrolled exceptional needs child for up to 100 new children in years 2024 and 2025.

Subgrant Option B: OKDHS will administer *Child Care Desert Grants – New Programs*. Currently, this grant program is funded through ARPA. It will continue to be funded by ARPA in Year 1 of PDG. After Year 1, ARPA funding will end, and PDG funding will continue and expand this grant program. These grants will be available for new ECCE programs in child care deserts. The primary goal of this grant program is to increase access to high-quality programs where there is the greatest need. In order to be eligible for grant funding, applicants will need to

have started the licensure process with OKDHS (at a minimum, issuance of a license number and completion of an application visit). Programs requesting a Child Care Desert Grant must agree to participate in the state’s subsidy program, as well as QRIS. Child care licensing specialists monitor programs for compliance with licensing regulations, and Stars Outreach Specialists at OKDHS monitor compliance with quality standards. Payments will be provided in a two-step process: \$5,000 for each licensed slot in the ECCE program, then \$5,000 per enrolled child in those slots after a 12-month period. OKDHS plans to expand this grant opportunity of \$5,000 per enrolled child for up to 500 new children in 2024 and 2025.

Subgrant Option C: OKDHS will use renewal funding to improve the quality of programs through local and statewide systems and supports. Many activities proposed in Activity One through Activity Five fall under Subgrant Option C. This includes: *Public Awareness and Engagement Campaign, Local-level Campaigns; Family Support Specialists; Local-level Partnership Program; MIECHV Innovative Pilot; Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot; Pyramid Model implementation; Transition Summit; Developmental Monitoring; Infant Early Childhood Mental Health; Reach Out and Read; Part C Data Equity Specialization; and Early Learning Inventory.*

In addition, to advance the goals of PDG, OSDE has contributed NFS funding to support the salaries of 64 teachers at 30 OECP sites, reaching approximately 2,600 children birth to age 3 in 239 classrooms in both urban and rural areas across Oklahoma. These OECP sites will participate in PDG activities, including Pyramid Model implementation, professional development and coaching, and family engagement supports to enhance program quality.

Basis for Approach to Subgranting and Anticipated Impact

Oklahoma’s approach to subgranting builds on findings from its 2019 Needs Assessment and

Strategic Plan. The decision to target portions of PDG B-5 funding to rural parts of the state is in response to Needs Assessment data that shows 55% of Oklahomans live in child care deserts and rural Oklahomans face challenges accessing child care, health care, and services important for children's growth and development. The 2019 Needs Assessment also reported that parents and providers cite inadequate capacity is a major barriers to child care in the state. In every region, demand for care is not being met, especially in rural areas. It is expected that impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and workforce challenges have exacerbated this situation. Expanding capacity in existing and new programs in child care deserts will directly address these needs.

The need for workforce support is evident in 2019 Needs Assessment data that show stakeholders identified staff quality as a primary need and one of the most important components of an ECCE system. Stakeholders agreed providers are often undereducated and underqualified to provide trauma-informed care. The 2019 Needs Assessment also found the greatest barriers to professional development are time and cost. It also identified a need for more providers to meet the needs of children with disabilities. PDG funding invests in building the knowledge and expertise of the ECCE workforce and program quality improvements. These investments are will create a high-quality, accessible, system of care with a stable and supported workforce.

Subaward investments aimed at public awareness, community engagement, and building local capacity to support systems development grow out of Needs Assessment data, which show there are gaps in knowledge about B-5 services and how to access them. The 2019 Needs Assessment reported that ECCE programs may be available to parents, who may not know they exist, hindering uptake. In focus groups, parents reported hearing about programs primarily through word of mouth, highlighting the importance of increasing community awareness. Additionally, stakeholders and child care providers emphasized a need to increase parents'

awareness of the importance of early learning through positive, approachable messages so they understand the value of enrolling their children in ECCE programs. Addressing issues related to quality and availability are critical for maximizing choice and filling unmet need for ECCE.

Bonus Areas

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families

Oklahoma's PDG project is purposefully designed to build local capacity, support families, and leverage partnerships. Successful, locally-coordinated enrollment systems, which function as part of a statewide system, will be critical to this work. OKDHS proposes a *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot* that will streamline application and access to services for families. The proposed Pilot is described in detail in Activity Three.

Improving Workforce Compensation

As described in Activity Four, renewal funding will support *Child Care Provider Benefits, Categorical Eligibility for Subsidized Child Care, Telemedicine, and Telehealth*. This initiative will extend the currently ARPA-funded categorical eligibility for subsidized child care to the ECCE workforce in the three *Local-level Partnership Program* pilot communities. This benefit will be offered in conjunction with telemedicine and teletherapy supports through Oklahoma Shared Services to help address the health and mental health needs of the workforce.

Increasing Access to Inclusive Settings

Oklahoma's PDG project will expand access to inclusive settings through the *Exceptional Needs Reimbursement Grant, Special Populations – Existing Programs*, described in Activity Six. *Pyramid Model* implementation and *Developmental Monitoring* (described in Activity Four) and *Part C Data Equity Specialization* (described in Activity Five) will support the workforce to more effectively identify, support, and provide inclusive settings for children in need.

Project Timeline and Milestones

Oklahoma PDG B-5 Activities, Years 1-3	Year	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Project Administration													
<i>RFP or contract development, monitoring and compliance, progress reports; partner engagement and coordination; TA and training; PPEP implementation</i>													
<i>Hire staff: Job postings, interview, hire, onboard</i>													
Activity One: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment													
Engage state/local stakeholder & partners; Create Needs Assessment (NA) Update Workgroup; Issue professional services contract for NA update													
Review existing NA; Collect & analyze state/local NAs, including COVID impact data from state/local partners													
Develop data collection plan; Implement plan													
Complete NA Update; Gather stakeholder feedback; Finalize & present to OPSR Board & partners													
Identify/issue professional services contract for 4 studies													
1) Workforce Study; 2) Fiscal and Policy Report													
3) Reach and Risk Report for all OK Counties; 4) Expulsion/Suspension Study													
Disseminate NA, accompanying reports, and briefs; Ongoing updates to NA													
Activity Two: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan													
Engage state/local stakeholders & partners; Create workgroup for Strategic Plan (SP) Update													
Issue professional services contract for SP update-OKDHS													
Collect, review, & align existing plans from partners													
Plan development and feedback from stakeholders													
Finalize & present to OPSR Board & partners													
Dissemination of SP, reports, and briefs													
Ongoing progress monitoring and updates to SP													

Activity Three: Maximize Parent and Family Engagement in the B-5 System												
Engage state/local stakeholder & partners; Create Community & Family Engagement Implementation Team												
Public Awareness and Engagement Campaign-OKDHS												
Issue professional services contract												
Design comprehensive campaign												
Launch campaign; gather feedback; modify, improve												
Develop RFP for Local Level Campaigns; Select up to 8 communities for participation												
T/TA provided for local campaigns												
Launch aligned community-level campaigns; gather feedback; modify, improve												
OPSR Subcontract: 10 Regional Family Support Specialists for CCR&R Networks												
OPSR Subcontract: Local-level Partnerships Pilot												
Design program; Develop RFP; Select 3 communities												
Hire local staff; 3 coordinators for 3 communities												
Implementation of program and accompanying T/TA												
Engage local stakeholders/partners; Local needs assessment and strategic plan												
Develop family engagement plan; Establish parent advisory councils/coalitions												
Local campaigns aligned with state level												
OPSR Subcontract: MIECHV Innovative Pilot for Local Referral Coordination												
OPSR Subcontract: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment (CAEE) Pilot												
Project planning and design; selection of local partner												
Launch and test CAEE platform												
Evaluation/learning; improvements made; CAEE modified												
Reach Out and Read (ROR) project with Head Start; Expansion to 3 rural communities												

Activity Four: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices												
Engage state/local stakeholder & partners; Create Workforce Implementation Team												
Pyramid Model implementation (OKDHS, OECP, child care)												
Training, professional development												
Implement in 30 OECP sites												
Implement in remaining 50 selected child care sites												
OPSR Subcontract: Transition Summit; Developmental Monitoring/LTSAE; IECMH Rural Expansion Project to Child Care; aligned with Activity 3 locations												
OPSR Subcontract: Child Care Provider Benefits, Categorical Eligibility for Subsidized Child Care, Telemedicine, and Telehealth; 3 communities												
Activity Five: Support Program Quality Improvement												
Engage state/local stakeholder & partners; Form CQI Team												
SoonerStart: Part C Data Analyst, Equity Specialization												
OSDE: Early Learning Inventory												
Activity Six: Subgrants to Enhance Quality and Expand Access to Existing and New Programs and/or Systems Enhancement												
Child Care Desert Grants - Existing Programs (Subgrant Option A); Exceptional Needs Reimbursement Grant, Special Population – Existing Programs (Subgrant Option A); Child Care Desert Grants - New Programs (Subgrant Option B)												
Subgrant Option C: Subgrant activities described in Activity Six (narrative) and embedded in timeline and milestones presented above.												
Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPEP)												
Contract with third-party evaluator; Form Evaluation Team												
Update and align PPEP with NA and SP updates												
Implement PPEP												
Quarterly review of PPEP implementation and progress toward achievement of Strategic Plan goals and objectives; Recommendations for adjustment and quality improvement.												

Organizational Capacity/Monitoring

Evidence of Relevant Experience and Expertise

OKDHS will serve as the prime recipient and state entity implementing and overseeing Oklahoma's PDG B-5 Renewal Grant. OKDHS is the largest state agency in Oklahoma and provides a wide range of assistance programs to help Oklahomans in need. OKDHS-managed programs include: food benefits (SNAP); temporary cash assistance (TANF); services for persons with developmental disabilities and persons who are aging; adult protective services; and SoonerCare, the state's Medicaid program. Within OKDHS, Child Care Services (CCS) is responsible for oversight of the child care subsidy program, child care licensing, and professional development and quality initiatives such as Oklahoma's QRIS.

CCS is deeply engaged in ECCE systems work and support in Oklahoma. It is committed to improving ECCE program quality and access, enhancing the ECCE workforce through professional development, and improving collaboration among ECCE system stakeholders, state agencies, and partners to improve service provision and benefit providers, children, and families at the local level. CCS works in partnership with parents, legislators, ECCE providers, the federal Office of Child Care, OPSR, state agencies, tribes, contractors, and other stakeholders who are committed to fulfilling the state's mission. The purpose, role, and structure of CCS aligns directly with PDG B-5 goals and proposed grant activities.

OKDHS manages a significant amount of federal funding. This includes \$227 million per year from CCDF⁷ and \$360 million in ARPA Child Care Stabilization Funds, which have been distributed to more than 2,000 child care centers and family child care homes statewide. The

⁷ Federal funding provided to states to support low-income working families by providing access to affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs. CCDF also improves the quality of care to support children's healthy development and learning by supporting child care licensing, quality improvement systems to help programs meet higher standards, and support for child care workers to attain more training and education.

agency has systems in place for oversight and monitoring of federal funds; these will extend to the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant.

To support implementation of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant, OKDHS will partner with OPSR, whose mission is to coordinate an early childhood system in Oklahoma that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school. OPSR is a quasi-governmental organization and public-private partnership with two branches. The OPSR Board was created under the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act of 2003 (Title 10 O.S. § 640), and is the designated body that serves as Oklahoma’s State Early Childhood Advisory Council. The OPSR Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit created under Oklahoma law (Title 10 O.S. § 640.3) to serve as a fiduciary partner with the OPSR Board and accepts both public and private funds to support early childhood initiatives. OPSR’s legislative duties include: conduct an assessment of existing public and private programs to determine effectiveness and efficient use of state dollars; implement a public engagement campaign and establish a structure to facilitate communication to develop and improve school readiness opportunities at the local level; encourage public and private programs, services, and initiatives be brought together to provide coordinated, community-based, effective and cost-efficient programs; maximize the extent to which private-sector funding is leveraged and federal, state, and local funds are coordinated with private funds; establish standards of accountability in school readiness programs and policies, and recognize and promote best practices; and submit an annual report to the legislature and governor.

Further, OPSR implements key aspects supporting the B-5 system, such as the state’s CCR&R network (OPSR is a recipient of funding from OKDHS) and the Oklahoma Clearinghouse for Early Childhood Success. Additionally, OPSR was the recipient agency of the state’s initial PDG B-5 grant (\$3.1 million). OPSR’s role as a convener and coordinator make it

integral to the state’s successful implementation of PDG B-5 activities.

For reference, the following organizational charts are provided in the Appendix (File 2): OKDHS (agency-level), OKDHS - Child Care Services, and OPSR.

Governance Structure

Oklahoma’s governance structure has not changed since the state’s initial grant application. However, the prime recipient of the initial grant, OPSR, has been replaced with OKDHS to comply with requirements of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Oklahoma operates with Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of government. The Oklahoma Office of the Governor is within the Executive Branch. OKDHS and other state agencies fall under the Governor’s Office. OKDHS is overseen by a director, who is supported by special advisors, deputy directors, and chief of staff. PDG B-5 activities will be embedded in the Child Care Services division of OKDHS. Child Care Services is under the direction of the Chief of Programs, Deputy Director, and Chief of Staff and Operations.

The OPSR Board is the state’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (SAC), serving in an advisory capacity to OKDHS and other state entities supporting Oklahoma’s B-5 system; this group will serve in an advisory capacity for purposes of the PDG. OKDHS will be the primary decision-maker for all grant activities. All sectors of the B-5 system are represented in the SAC.

Due to the comprehensive nature of this project and the short time frame within which to accomplish the intended goals and objectives, two PDG Steering/Leadership Teams (Workgroup: Needs Assessment Update, Workgroup: Strategic Plan Update) and four PDG Implementation Teams (Public Awareness and Engagement, Community and Family Engagement, Workforce, Quality) will guide implementation of project activities.

OKDHS and OPSR engaged families, ECCE providers, philanthropic leaders, tribal

representatives, policy organizations, and members of the OPSR Board and national experts in early childhood in the development of planned PDG B-5 activities. Collectively, participating agency and organization representatives bring capacity and experience in early learning and quality program standards; evidence-based practice; professional development; health; infant and early childhood mental health; trauma-informed care; home visiting programs; early intervention; and grant evaluation and administration. They represent programs of child care services, Head Start (including Tribal Head Start), pre-k, child guidance, SoonerStart (early intervention), Maternal and Child Health, Resource and Referral, Professional Development Registry, systems of care/trauma informed care and Home Visiting.

OCCY's Parent Partnership Board is a current opportunity available to parents and providers to engage in B-5 system development. The board will be leveraged extensively for outreach related to PDG B-5 activities, as described throughout this application. Additionally, the CCR&R network (8 regions), implemented by OPSR, is a natural mechanism to reach families and providers. The state's Needs Assessment Update will help to identify gaps and barriers to meaningful participation and reveal opportunities to enhance engagement opportunities.

Role of State Early Childhood Advisory Council

State Early Childhood Advisory Council (OPSR Board) members will serve in an advisory capacity by monitoring renewal grant implementation and evaluation activities throughout the project period and beyond. The OPSR Board will also oversee Strategic Plan refinement, continuous improvement, and strategic financial plan development, including project sustainability components therein. Workgroups and implementation teams will guide the day-to-day work of grant activities and, under the direction of OKDHS and OPSR, provide quarterly updates to the Board and make recommendations as needed. The OPSR Board will communicate

progress to the Office of the Governor and cabinet officials, and will facilitate coordination between PDG B-5 goals and state administration priorities.

OCCY's Parent Partnership Board was created, in part, to incorporate family and provider voice in the state's policy decisions. The Parent Partnership Board is aligned to and linked closely with the SAC, providing feedback loops between the two entities.

Tools and Methods to Promote Accountability Across the State's ECCE System

As the state agency implementing a wide range of programs and services that require monitoring and evaluation (e.g., child care licensing, subsidy, QRIS) OKDHS has many tools and methods in place that promote accountability across the state's ECCE system. OKDHS has compliance and accounting departments that monitor programmatic and fiscal implementation of federal and state funding. The agency is also accountable to the state legislature and must provide updates and annual reports to the legislature and governor.

Further, since 1982, OCCY has helped create quality systems for children, youth, and families by bringing accountability and independent oversight into Oklahoma's child and youth service system. Its mission is to improve services to Oklahoma's children by planning, coordinating, and communicating with communities and between public and private agencies.

There is some fragmentation in the state's ECCE system; data fragmentation, siloed professional development, and duplication of or unconnected parent and family engagement are the three primary barriers. These areas will benefit from analysis and integration that will take place as part of PDG B-5 Renewal Grant activities (e.g., Transition Summit; Pyramid Model implementation; Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot).

Approach to Program Performance Evaluation Plan

A detailed description of Oklahoma's PPEP is provided in the Program Performance

Evaluation Plan section and in the Project Timeline and Milestones section. With renewal funding, OKDHS will update its PPEP. Oklahoma’s updated PPEP will aim to foster continuous quality improvement (CQI) through performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation, including implementation metrics via a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) approach.

Early Childhood Data Systems

Oklahoma is in the process of creating an ECIDS that will support the state’s ability to link program data, information, and trends in a way that supports ease of service access for families and improves the accuracy and completeness of information about the B-5 system that will be used to inform policy and practice at the local and state levels. Throughout 2019, OPSR engaged in extensive planning and stakeholder engagement to plan development of the ECIDS. The Governor’s cabinet, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and numerous agency leaders have partnered to support this critical work. OPSR Foundation’s contractor inventoried data elements from numerous systems, planned for integration and analyzed a wide range of state agency data system architecture; identified the extent to which various data systems and unique identifiers are currently linked or will be linked with other data systems; facilitated both large and focused stakeholder engagement sessions to synthesize foundational priority use cases for Oklahoma’s ECIDS, enhancing interagency coordination and service coverage in the short term and improving program quality throughout Oklahoma’s mixed delivery system in the long term; and crafted a robust data inventory, data integration, and data governance proposal.

Oklahoma has unique strengths in the quality and availability of data within individual programs and initiatives, but varying program standards and data collection efforts across the mixed delivery system generate weakness in data comparability and comprehensiveness. And, Oklahoma does not yet have a data system capable of determining a true unduplicated count of

children in need of ECCE services. For example, Oklahoma’s Universal Pre-K program maintains standards and detailed enrollment data collection procedures aligned with K-12 education, while licensed child care programs follow separate benchmarks set through Reaching for the Stars. There are also limitations to data disaggregation and enrollment data.

High-quality data linked across the ECCE mixed delivery system is critical for supporting collaboration and maximizing parental choice. As described in Activity Three, Oklahoma proposes a Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot which will serve as a launching point for future updates to the ECIDS.

OKDHS will also coordinate its ECIDS efforts with the ongoing work of the Oklahoma State Longitudinal Data System (OSLDS). OSLDS connects student data across the K-12 system, and there is some overlap between the systems. OSLDS and the ECIDS plan both aim to better understand the impact of early childhood systems on educational preparedness, use integrated data to help answer early childhood policy questions, and support continuous improvement in programs and services. OSLDS specifically plans to utilize PDG B-5 efforts to assist in creating an application program interface for pre-k enrollment data. The ECIDS will expand upon the work of OSLDS, and both projects will depend on each other for sources of critical information.

Child Care Subsidy System

As noted above and described in the Program Performance Evaluation Plan section, Oklahoma proposes a Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot. This pilot will better link the state’s subsidy system with ECCE benefits (e.g., TANF, Medicaid, WIC) and services (e.g., IDEA) received by children and families. The state’s Needs Assessment Update will also help to identify barriers to participation in public benefit programs, such as child care subsidy, and how information and access to these services can be better coordinated.

The Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot will leverage findings from the Needs Assessment Update to connect data, programs, and services.

Program Performance Evaluation Plan

With its initial PDG B-5 Grant funding (2019), Oklahoma created an extensive PPEP. The plan was designed by third-party evaluators from University of Oklahoma and Mathematica in collaboration with OPSR and stakeholders. The purpose of the plan is to evaluate progress toward Strategic Plan goals and guide data-based decision making and continuous quality improvement (CQI). Oklahoma's PPEP is designed to examine research questions to inform implementation and CQI, track outcomes, and provide accountability.

Updates to the PPEP will reflect the current state of affairs in Oklahoma, progress that has been made since the initial PDG B-5 Grant, as well as to align with updates to the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. A review of the tools, indicators, and metrics laid out in the plan will need to be reviewed to ensure they remain the most effective approach to implementing the PPEP. This is true not only at the onset of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant, but with each significant update to the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, including after the grant period ends.

Oklahoma's updated PPEP will aim to foster CQI through performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation, including implementation metrics. The state will implement a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) approach for CQI that takes place quarterly. In partnering with those implementing an initiative, staff supporting CQI will help to plan CQI efforts (Plan), while those on the ground will oversee improvement efforts (Do) and track data to inform adjustments (Study). Together, they will determine whether to adopt, adapt, or abandon the solution (Act).

Much program data already exists to inform process and outcomes evaluations associated with PDG (e.g., participation in training and certificates earned, available through the Oklahoma

Professional Development Registry). ECIDS can be a useful tool in supporting the state’s performance monitoring and CQI efforts, as it provides accessible and real-time data. Data will also need to be collected to complete the program performance evaluation (e.g., data resulting from the Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment for Families Pilot). The digital system that is piloted as part of this initiative will serve as a primary mechanism for data collection.

The systems-level evaluation will focus on Strategic Plan initiatives in process and those being newly implemented, including using ECIDS for performance monitoring and CQI which will guide policy development and improvement. The inputs, key activities, and expected outcomes of the funded activities is described in the Logic Model section; the PPEP will monitor ongoing activities and progress toward goals and objectives of the PDG B-5 project.

In the first year of Oklahoma’s PDG B-5 Renewal Grant project period, OKDHS will identify a CQI team that will work with a contracted evaluator for the purpose of updating the PPEP and aligning it to the state’s updated Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. The PPEP will then be implemented by the OKDHS contracted evaluator in coordination with OKDHS and OPSR staff; renewal funding will support an Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Specialist at OKDHS. The contracted evaluator will be primarily responsible for finalizing updates to the PPEP, including data collection tools and metrics; conducting data collection and gathering data from agencies and programs; and providing ongoing information and reports to OKDHS to inform CQI in the B-5 system. OKDHS and OPSR staff will support evaluation activities by serving as a liaison between the CQI team, evaluators, and stakeholders and partners statewide; assisting with data gathering and reporting; and assisting with communication activities in alignment with the state’s Dissemination Plan. OKDHS and OPSR staff will also make connections to the Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment for Families Pilot, described

in Activity Three, to ensure data collection strategies align with the state’s developing ECIDS.

Awareness of potential obstacles to implementation of the PPEP will allow OKDHS and partners to proactively plan paths forward. These obstacles may include capacity of local programs and organizations to participate in evaluation activities. Technical assistance may be necessary for evaluation and data support among agencies participating in PDG B-5 funded activities. Building capacity within the system to participate in data collection will be fundamental to CQI and implementation of the PPEP over time. Stakeholder engagement will also need to be strengthened, as coordinated PDG evaluation activities waned in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic; OKDHS and OPSR will reinvigorate these efforts and re-build trust and buy-in into evaluation processes.

The ambitious nature of the Strategic Plan, involving numerous strategies for each of the five goals, necessitates focusing evaluation resources on highest priority strategies and research questions at the outset. Given resource constraints, much of the evaluation will have to be conducted with in-house resources or through creative partnerships. OKDHS and OPSR are committed to forging paths forward that build a sustainable approach in Oklahoma. Further, B-5 systems work in Oklahoma, including sustainability of an evaluation plan, assumes continued political support for the initiative. The risk of fluctuating political priorities is substantially mitigated by the existence of OPSR, a quasi-governmental organization that has ongoing communications with state leadership and will champion the systems initiative.

Logic Model

<p>Target Audience(s): Families and children, communities, public and private organizations, and elected officials. Project Goal: An ECCE system that provides children birth to age 5 equitable and seamless access to supports they need to thrive.</p>			
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OKDHS (Lead Agency) • OPSR (Lead Entity) • OCCY PPB • Collaborative working relationships with state, tribal & local agencies • PDG stakeholder groups, evaluation, and implementation teams • Existing infrastructure, data systems, data sources • Existing early childhood programs • Existing Early Childhood Care & Education workforce (ECCE providers) • Parents, community members, NPOs, philanthropic & business leaders, & concerned citizens • Grant and matching funds 	<p>1. Conduct and disseminate Needs Assessment (NA) Update with stakeholders and partners. Workgroup will review existing NA and create data collection plan, including COVID impact data, update to ECIDS plan, and feedback from stakeholders.</p> <p>2. Update and disseminate Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan with stakeholders and partners. Workgroup will review and integrate existing plans.</p> <p>3. Engage stakeholders and partners to maximize parent and family engagement in the B-5 System. Workgroup will design and implement a comprehensive, community level public awareness/engagement campaign. Provide technical assistance, training for local-level partnerships.</p>	<p>1. NA that identifies strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the current ECCE system. Additional Reports: workforce study, expulsion/suspension study, fiscal and policy, reach and risk.</p> <p>2. Updated strategic plan with pathways to leverage strengths, address challenges/barriers, and promote coordination and collaboration in ECCE system.</p> <p>3. Comprehensive public awareness/engagement plan that includes measure of stakeholders, meetings, and events; communities implementing public awareness campaign and overall reach, including number served in programs, TA and trainings; metrics from subgrants to ECCE programs; monitoring & progress reports.</p>	<p>Short-term Outcomes:</p> <p>1. Increased understanding of ECCE system strengths, challenges, and opportunities for stakeholders, agencies, communities, and families; COVID impacts on ECCE system, providers, communities, and families; data needs and coordinated direction for ECIDS progress.</p> <p>2. Strategies to achieve a coordinated and equitable ECCE system at a state and local level that meets the needs of families and children.</p> <p>3. Improved parent/family engagement with ECCE systems, including increased awareness of and access to child development services and supports in the ECCE system; trust in programs/services; informed input from families.</p>

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p><i>Repeated from above for clarity.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OKDHS (Lead Agency) • OPSR (Lead Entity) • OCCY PPB • Collaborative working relationships with state, tribal & local agencies • PDG stakeholder groups, evaluation, and implementation teams • Existing infrastructure, data systems, data sources • Existing early childhood programs • Existing Early Childhood Care & Education workforce (ECCE providers) • Parents, community members, NPOs, philanthropic & business leaders, & concerned citizens • Grant and matching funds 	<p>4. Disseminate best practices to support the B-5 workforce by conducting meetings, training, and events, and implementing the Pyramid Model; OCCY Parent Partnership Board; Translation Services; MIECHV Innovative Pilot; Coordinated enrollment pilots; Reach Out and Read.</p> <p>5. Engage stakeholders and partners to support program quality improvement. Build CQI team to implement the Pyramid Model, Part C Data Equity Specialization, Early Learning Inventory; Transition Summit for rural communities; Developmental Monitoring/LTSAE; IECMH implementation of plan; Child Care Provider Benefits. Updating the PPEP will include evaluation design, review of PPEP strategic plan and recommendations.</p> <p>6. Subgrants include: Exceptional Needs. Reimbursement Grants (Existing programs); Child Care Desert Grants (Existing & New)</p>	<p>4. Measure of meetings, stakeholders, events, including Pyramid Model sites, trainings, number of staff trained, site visits, TA and coaching; metrics from subgrants to ECCE programs; monitoring & progress reports.</p> <p>5. Measure of meetings, stakeholders, events, including Pyramid Model sites, trainings, number of staff trained, site visits, TA and coaching; metrics from subgrants to ECCE programs; monitoring & progress reports.</p> <p>6. Subgrant outputs include monitoring and progress reports on: Translation Services; MIECHV Innovative Pilot; Coordinated enrollment pilots; Reach Out and Read; Transition Summit for rural communities; Developmental Monitoring/LTSAE; IECMH implementation of plan; Child Care Provider Benefit; Exceptional Need Reimbursement; Child Care Desert Grants (Existing & New). Output also includes metrics from subgrants.</p>	<p>4 & 5. Higher local-level capacity to support young children and families; alignment of local and state plans. More professional development opportunities, resulting in increased skill levels for ECCE professionals and high-quality care; increased support and resources; and a peer learning network. More providers trained in IECMH (trauma-informed approach) to provide behavioral health supports for families.</p> <p><u>Long-term Outcomes:</u> Increased capacity of families, communities, public and private organizations, developed through: strengthened infrastructure, (including data systems, ECCE system improvements) that provides wide range of high-quality, culturally responsive choices; coordinated planning that promotes innovative and blended funding to support accessibility and affordability for families; evaluation to promote best practices, lessons learned, and inform decisions; and public policy agenda guided and supported by stakeholders and ECCE providers that supports young children and families, ECCE providers, and ECCE professionals.</p>

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities

Framework for Oversight of Federal Funds

OKDHS manages an annual budget of \$3.227 billion, administers Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and has extensive experience providing oversight for federal grants. Existing oversight and monitoring processes will be used to manage PDG funds. OKDHS's Finance Department ensures that programs and grants operate within their appropriated budgets and identified funding sources. OKDHS also maintains advanced accounting systems that provide for accurate and timely financial information associated with each funding stream.

OPSR is a longstanding and trusted partner and contractor of OKDHS. OPSR has internal processes and protocols that positions it well to be the primary partner for PDG. OKDHS will use existing internal processes to manage its primary subrecipient (OPSR) and contractors.

Systems for Record-Keeping and Financial Management

Systems for record-keeping and financial management are the responsibility of the OKDHS Finance Division, which performs centralized accounting, fiscal reporting, claims auditing, payroll, and budgeting functions. The Finance Division also provides fiscal guidance for OKDHS personnel based on generally accepted accounting principles, governmental accounting standards, the governmental auditing standards as prescribed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A133, cost principles for federal funds received by state government as prescribed by OMB Circular A87, and adherence to purchasing laws.

Procedures to Identify and Mitigate Risks and Issues

OKDHS has policies and procedures in place for the monitoring of all federal funds. The roles of the Finance Division, described above, and clear expectations with subaward recipients and contractors about their fiscal responsibilities, will prevent and mitigate risk. A clean audit

history provides evidence of the department's ability to do this work successfully.

Maintaining Oversight of Program Activities, Partners, and Subrecipients

To maintain oversight of program activities, partners, and subrecipients, the OKDHS Project Manager will maintain a monitoring file (grant tracking system) for each contractor and subrecipient for this grant with items including, monitoring plan; reports from subcontractor; technical assistance reports, plan of correction (as necessary), and copies of critical information to and from the subrecipient. All subrecipients will be required to keep records and documentation of expenses.

OPSR is the primary subrecipient of PDG funding from OKDHS. The Executive Director of the OPSR Foundation is responsible to the Foundation to ensure all funds are administered appropriately and that all grant activities adhere to applicable federal and programmatic regulations. The Executive Director reviews contracts, grants, invoices, and purchases for approval submitted and validated by the chief financial officer. The finance team processes payments upon approval. Checks are signed by the Foundation Board President and stamped by the OPSR Foundation administrative coordinator. The Foundation maintains a separate banking account for all federal awards to ensure that interest is not earned on account balances. The OPSR Foundation receives an annual external audit that is reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information

OKDHS complies with all federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations regarding client confidentiality. Per Section 183 of Title 56 of the Oklahoma Statutes, information and records obtained by OKDHS concerning an applicant or recipient of OKDHS programs or services is confidential. This includes electronic data and records generated by OKDHS. To protect confidential and sensitive information, OKDHS employees only examine applicant or recipient

information in connection with the performance of their official duties. Restrictions are in place for who handles data, and data is stored only on systems that are password-protected.

Credentialed logins are required for access to confidential or sensitive information.

As a state agency overseeing many subrecipients and contractors, OKDHS has policies and procedures in place to ensure that confidential and sensitive information is handled properly. All OKDHS contracts, including those that will be executed under this grant, include a subsection on Confidential Information that states the contractor will not divulge, disclose, or communicate, in any manner, confidential information to any third party.

Disposition of sensitive and/or confidential information at the end of the project period is done in strict accordance with all applicable statutes, rules, regulations, records disposition schedules, or records disposition authorizations. OKDHS periodically reviews its records disposition schedule to determine records eligible for destruction. OKDHS must receive written approval from the Archives and Records Commission 30 calendar days prior to records destruction. The Support Services Departmental Services Unit records management coordinator obtains approval to destroy records annually. Records not on an approved records disposition schedule or records involved in any type of litigation may not be destroyed. Security destruction is processed at an approved Internal Revenue Service records destruction facility. Security destruction procedures are followed for the destruction of all OKDHS records.

Project Sustainability Plan

Sustainability Plan, Partnerships, and Funding

After OKSHS' federal funding period ends for its PDG Renewal Grant, the state will sustain elements of its grant-funded projects that prove to be most successful and effective. By nature of the organization's role in B-5 systems building, OPSR, including the Oklahoma Clearinghouse

for Early Childhood Success and the CCR&R network, will serve a central role in sustainability. Systems coordination will be absorbed by OPSR to continue the progress of PDG. This includes maintaining progress and completing updates to the state’s Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, coordination of inter-agency dialogue and decision-making, and implementation of supports to reach families in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways (e.g., translation support).

Primarily in Years 2 and 3, the OPSR Board and Foundation will actively seek new funding through state, private, and local sources and identify strategies to redirect existing federal, state, or private funding. Demonstrating effectiveness of PDG activities through implementation of the PEPP will allow OPSR to strengthen fundraising efforts with private partners and secure grant funding.

Components of project sustainability will depend on the outcomes of PDG activities. For example, OPSR will learn how the roles of CCR&Rs can be modified to include an ongoing, intentional focus on systems-building at the local level (spread and scale from pilot work to full implementation). CCR&Rs will support dissemination of project information during, and will sustain those communication efforts following, the grant period. Additionally, as project data becomes available, it will reveal the most effective tools, strategies, and barriers to sustainability. Through needs assessment and strategic planning, OPSR, as the SAC, will review how PDG activities might be expanded or merged with existing programs and services with similar goals for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation in the long-term. OKDHS, OPSR, and partners (e.g., OSDE) will engage in planning discussions throughout the grant period to plan for sustainability of efforts and partnerships at the conclusion of the project period.

This approach to sustainability is strategic and will be most effective and feasible because critical infrastructure staff are employed with OKDHS as well as OPSR, which is the “home” for

Oklahoma’s systems work. OPSR has committed to keeping PDG staff members at its organization after the grant period ends to continue the progress that will have been made. Further, the mechanisms for engagement with stakeholders and partners (e.g., OPSR Board, OCCY’s Parent Partnership Board) were in existence before PDG and will continue to exist after PDG, creating a natural pathway for the sustainability of PDG activities.

Oklahoma’s sustainability plan takes into account efforts to blend or braid funds across the mixed delivery system. Part of the work of PDG will be to uncover different approaches to service delivery and how to braid funding streams efficiently. Through PDG activities, Oklahoma will determine if there are existing program rules, policies, or requirements that may be creating barriers to the integration of funding streams. For example, the Needs Assessment Update will provide opportunities for input from families, ECCE programs, and partners that may reveal roadblocks that need to be addressed to improve access, quality, and outcomes.

Building on Progress from Previous Initiatives

Oklahoma has made progress integrating and aligning funding streams to support cohesive program delivery in the B-5 system. Many funding streams support the B-5 system and will continue to do so. For example, OSDE’s dedicated funding to the OECP, CCDBG funding administered through OKDHS, ARPA, and private funding through OPSR, among others.

While Oklahoma was able to implement its initial PDG funding, execution of all areas of the state’s B-5 Strategic Plan following the initial grant year was challenging due to factors noted throughout this application – limited funding, limited attention and resources due to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, and staff turnover in state leadership positions. OKDHS’s proposed budget (described in Project Budget and Budget Justification Narrative) allocates funding for staff where it is most needed – OKDHS and OPSR – to move work forward. Having staff

members dedicated to project implementation is the most critical aspect of the budget, without whom contracts, subgrants, and activities cannot move forward. Recognizing the importance of consistent staff and focus on PDG following the grant period, OPSR will absorb staff and functions of the grant into its agency, as feasible, to support sustainability over the long term.

Further, PDG activities will be an impetus for further development and coordination. One example is the proposed Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families Pilot; this activity will be an impactful portion of the state's ECIDS, which will then lead to completion of other aspects of the ECIDS funded outside of PDG.

Lastly, in 2020, OKDHS established the Oklahoma Clearinghouse for Early Childhood Success (Clearinghouse); the Clearinghouse was transferred to OPSR in 2021. The Clearinghouse promotes well-being for Oklahoma children and their families by building an evolving definition of quality, fast-tracking innovation, implementing research-informed practice and practice-informed research to support and improve early childhood systems and maximizing public/private partnerships. It will drive innovation and improvement through implementation supports to providers of early childhood services. The Clearinghouse also provides opportunities for teachers, providers, parents, and others to submit innovative ideas for consideration and further exploration. To support project sustainability, OPSR will align Clearinghouse focus areas with the B-5 Strategic Plan and include a community/local partnership area of focus for Years 2 and 3. The Clearinghouse will have built-in funding to support ongoing B-5 systems work.

Dissemination Plan

Oklahoma's Dissemination Plan will build upon dissemination strategies from the state's initial PDG B-5 Grant to support the goals of strengthening the ECCE workforce, enhancing ECCE program quality, and expanding access for children. The plans, findings, reports, and

events for PDG B-5 will be disseminated through multiple channels for the purposes of 1) increasing project visibility by informing relevant audiences about the PDG grant purpose, projects, and stakeholder opportunities; 2) gaining feedback on PDG plans; 3) increasing family and stakeholder engagement; 4) sharing and spreading new learning related to early childhood systems work, including strengths and gaps; and 5) promoting advocacy efforts.

OPSR will maintain primary responsibility for the Dissemination Plan. OKDHS has included communications staff in the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant budget to ensure sufficient staffing to accomplish dissemination activities. Additionally, OPSR's Communication Director, who currently implements a comprehensive statewide communications plan, will weave the PDG Dissemination Plan into existing communication channels. Communications staff will also be responsible for customizing messaging for unique target audiences and distribution platforms.

Target audiences for dissemination include families, partners, tribes, and agencies at the local, regional, and state level. Many stakeholders are known to OKDHS, target audiences will be confirmed, and new target audiences will be identified during the updates to the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. OKDHS and OPSR will work with a broad range of partners to reach all sectors of the ECCE system through dissemination activities.

To accomplish the goals outlined above and to reach targeted audiences, Oklahoma will implement multiple strategies. OPSR's partnership with OCCY and its Parent Partnership Board will be integral to local outreach and will align with OCCY's role supporting parents related to implementation of grant activities. Additionally, the state will leverage existing cross-sector agency groups, advisories, and community networks to reach target audiences in communities and regions throughout the state. Outreach to these groups, which include ECCE providers, may include strategies such as webinars and trainings, program newsletters, social media, and

CCR&R networks. Further, the OPSR Board (SAC) and OPSR Foundation Board, which include state agencies and partners, and are thus a natural mechanism for reaching this audience, will be provided PDG information at regular meetings. The Needs Assessment updates and five-year Strategic Plan progress will be presented quarterly to the OPSR Board, annually to OCCY, and to other boards and commissions of state agencies and nonprofits as requested. Findings will be posted on the OPSR website for broad reach and access among stakeholders.

Dissemination will also include information about the state’s evaluation plan and project outcomes which will, in part, explore the extent to which target audiences have received project information and have used it as intended (described in Program Performance Evaluation Plan). The project evaluation team will work with OPSR’s communications department to develop metrics related to this portion of the evaluation. An evaluation report of the project will be presented to the OPSR board and disseminated through the channels noted above.

A final report of project accomplishments, findings, and recommendations will be prepared by the third-party evaluator. This report will be provided to the Administration for Children and Families and will be posted on the OPSR website, as well as partners’ websites.

The timeline for dissemination will be ongoing and integrated into existing communication channels. A Year 1 timeline for dissemination activities is integrated into each Activity in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

Third-Party Agreements

Letter of Intent

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
Renewal Grant HHS-2022-ACF-OCC-TP-0180
Application Due Date: 11/07/2022

Among
Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS)
and
Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation (OPSRF)

I. PURPOSE

This Letter of Intent (LOI) is to establish a partnership between the parties as they work collaboratively to apply for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant. The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant will fund states to build upon their initial grant activities, while considering the changing needs of children and families created by the COVID 19 Pandemic and investing in strategies that will address those needs, supporting and strengthening the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce, enhancing quality, expanding access to early childhood services for children, particularly those in high-need communities, and creating seamless early learning experiences from birth through third grade. If the grant application is approved, the parties intend to enter into a separate legally binding agreement to detail the roles and responsibilities of each party in the administration of the Grant.

II. PERIOD OF LOI

The period of the LOI is from the latest date of signature of parties, until a legally binding agreement is entered into by the parties

III. LIMITATION OF LOI

Funding shall be provided under a separate agreement between the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) and Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation (OPSRF).

IV. RECITALS

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) serves as the lead agency responsible for administering the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant HHS-2022-ACF-OCC-TP-0180. OKDHS is the largest state agency and provides a wide range of assistance

programs to help Oklahomans in need. OKDHS-managed programs include: food benefits (SNAP); temporary cash assistance (TANF); services for persons with developmental disabilities and persons who are aging; adult protective services; child welfare programs; child support services; and child care assistance, licensing and monitoring; and

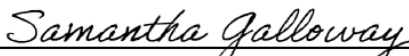
WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Partnerships for School Readiness (OPSR) serves as the lead entity responsible for administering the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant HHS-2022-ACF-OCC-TP-0180; serves as Oklahoma’s State Advisory Council (SAC) and leads Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school pursuant to § 10.640; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the establishment of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, the OPSR Foundation was created to solicit and receive public and philanthropic funds pursuant to § 10.640.3. The foundation supports OPSR’s vision and mission by expanding the breadth in which OPSR can financially support early childhood research, programs and initiatives.

NOW THEREFORE, the parties to this LOI agree to work together in good faith to apply for the PDG B-5 Grant and to negotiate an Agreement for the administration and performance of the PDG B-5 Grant requirements.

SIGNATURES


OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Samantha Galloway, Interim Director
2400 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73106

10/27/22
Date

OKLAHOMA PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOL READINESS



Carrie Williams, Executive Director
2915 North Classen Blvd., Ste. 400
Oklahoma City, OK 73103

10/27/2022
Date

Budget Justification Narrative

OKDHS requests funding to support the implementation of the PDG project and six major Activities and evaluation plan, described previously. Total federal funds in the amount of \$12,000,000 are requested: \$4,800,000 in Base/Operating for recipient OKDHS and \$7,200,000 for subrecipient OPSR. OKDHS’s total non-federal share contribution is \$3,999,191 which exceeds the 30% match requirement of \$3,600,000. Sub-totals throughout the justification that follows may reflect a \$1 to \$5 variance from line items due to accumulated rounding.

Annual Operating Budget

Table BJ-1 summarizes OKDHS’s 12-month, year-one annual operating budget. Total federal request includes recipient OKDHS’s base operating and subrecipient OPSR’s base operating funds. It reflects the non-federal share contributions by object class category which will also be shown in associated detail tables BJ-2 – BJ6 and, together, in Tables BJ-7.

Table BJ-1. PDG 12-Month, Year-One Annual Operating Budget

Cost Category	Federal Request (OKDHS + OPSR)	Base Funding (OKDHS - recipient)	Base Funding (OPSR - subrecipient)	Non-Federal Share (NFS)
Personnel	\$875,000	\$510,000	\$365,000	\$2,599,719
Fringe	\$397,200	\$331,500	\$65,700	\$882,749
Travel	\$11,000	\$8,800	\$2,200	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies	\$87,500	\$49,000	\$38,500	\$18,200
Contractual	\$8,993,926	\$3,068,876	\$5,925,050	\$260,000
Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$147,375	\$63,825	\$83,550	\$151,300
Indirect	\$1,487,999	\$767,999	\$720,000	\$87,195
Total	\$12,000,000	\$4,800,000	\$7,200,000	\$3,999,191

The justification for the 12-month, year-one budget is as follows:

Personnel justification: OKDHS requests \$875,000 for personnel expenses, including \$510,000 for OKDHS personnel expenses and \$365,000 for OPSR personnel expenses (Table BJ-2). Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) has committed \$2,240,000 in non-federal funds to support the personnel costs of 64 early childhood teachers to help OKHDS’s PDG goal of increasing access to care. OSDE is also supporting \$120,000 in personnel costs of two Early Childhood Specialists with non-federal funds to work with OPSR to achieve increased quality of care. With non-federal funds, OPSR is contributing \$239,719 in personnel costs of most of its current staff who will be assigned to the PDG project, if awarded. All positions are necessary to support the implementation and of the PDG project, Activities One through Five, and evaluation plan, described previously.

Table BJ-2. PDG Personnel Expenses by Position

Position	FTE to PDG	Average Annual Salary	Base Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
<i>OKDHS Personnel</i>					
PDG - Project Manager	1.00	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - Finance Manager	1.00	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - EC Workforce Coordinator	1.00	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - Evaluation Manager	1.00	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - Data Coordinator	1.00	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - Evaluation Specialist	1.00	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$0	\$0
PDG - Administrative Coordinator	1.00	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$0	\$0
64 teacher salaries (\$35,000)	64.00	\$35,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,240,000
OKDHS – Recipient Subtotal	71.00		\$510,000	\$0	\$2,240,000
<i>OPSR Personnel</i>					
PDG - OPSR Director of Early Childhood Systems	1.00	\$100,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000
<i>PDG - Community and Tribal Relations Specialist</i> (positions in italic are new to OPSR)	1.00	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000	\$0
<i>PDG - Communications Coordinator</i>	1.00	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000	\$0
<i>PDG - Operations Coordinator</i>	1.00	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000	\$0
<i>PDG - Professional Development Coordinator</i>	1.00	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000	\$0
<i>PDG - Administrative Coordinator</i>	1.00	\$55,000	\$0	\$55,000	\$0
PDG - OPSR Program Coordinator	0.50	\$57,750	\$0	\$0	\$28,875
PDG - OPSR Director of Communications	0.50	\$65,000	\$0	\$0	\$32,500
PDG - OPSR Executive Director	0.25	\$140,000	\$0	\$0	\$35,000
PDG - OPSR Director of Research	0.25	\$60,375	\$0	\$0	\$15,094
PDG - OPSR Business Process Engineer	0.25	\$63,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,750
PDG - OPSR Director of Finance	0.25	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
PDG - OPSR Executive Assistant	0.25	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,500

PDG - OPSR Director of Operations	0.25	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
<i>Early Childhood Specialists</i>	2.00	\$60,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
OPSR - Subrecipient Subtotal	10.50		\$0	\$365,000	\$359,719
Total PDG Personnel	81.5	\$510,000	\$365,000	\$365,000	\$2,599,719

Fringe justification: Robust benefits support staff retention. OKDHS requests \$397,200 (\$331,500 for recipient OKDHS and \$65,700 for subrecipient OPSR) in base operating funds for fringe (Table BJ-3). OKDHS has a fringe rate of 65%, OSDE has fringe rates of 65% and 34%, and OPSR has a fringe rate of 18%. OSDE and OPSR contribute the fringe associated with the positions they are supporting with non-federal funds.

Table BJ-3. PDG Fringe Benefits

Benefit	Rate	Base / Annual Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base / Annual Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
<i>OKDHS Fringe of 65% on \$510,000</i>				
DHS: Retirement - federal	15%	\$76,500	\$0	\$0
DHS: Retirement - state	10%	\$51,000	\$0	\$0
DHS: FICA	8%	\$40,800	\$0	\$0
DHS: Medicare	4%	\$20,400	\$0	\$0
DHS: Insurance	25%	\$127,500	\$0	\$0
DHS: Workers Compensation	3%	\$15,300	\$0	\$0
OKDHS - Recipient Subtotal	65%	\$331,500	\$0	\$0
<i>OSDE Fringe of 34% on \$2,240,000</i>				
OSDE: FICA	8%	\$0	\$0	\$179,200
OSDE: Insurance	15%	\$0	\$0	\$336,000
OSDE: Workers Compensation	8%	\$0	\$0	\$179,200
OSDE: Unemployment	3%	\$0	\$0	\$67,200
Subtotal OSDE	34%	\$0	\$0	\$761,600
<i>OPSR Fringe 18% of \$365,000 in base and \$239,719 in NFS</i>				
OPSR: Retirement	3%	\$0	\$10,950	\$7,192
OPSR: FICA	6%	\$0	\$21,900	\$14,383
OPSR: Medicare	2%	\$0	\$7,300	\$4,794
OPSR: Workers Compensation	1%	\$0	\$3,650	\$2,397
OPSR: Insurance	6%	\$0	\$21,900	\$14,383
OPSR – Subrecipient Subtotal	18%	\$0	\$65,700	\$43,149
<i>OSDE Fringe of 65% on 120,000</i>				
OSDE: Retirement - federal	15%	\$0	\$0	\$18,000
OSDE: Retirement - state	10%	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
OSDE: FICA	8%	\$0	\$0	\$9,600
OSDE: Medicare	4%	\$0	\$0	\$4,800

Benefit	Rate	Base / Annual Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base / Annual Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
OSDE: Workers Compensation	3%	\$0	\$0	\$3,600
OSDE: Insurance	25%	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
Subtotal OSDE	65%	\$0	\$0	\$78,000
Total Fringe	varies	\$331,500	\$65,700	\$882,749

Travel justification: As indicated in the NOFO, OKDHS and OPSR request funds to support out-of-town travel to Washington DC for the PDG conference. The total Travel request is \$11,000. OKDHS requires \$8,800 to send four people. OPSR requires \$2,200 to send one person. Each (5) traveler will require airfare (\$500), four nights at a hotel (\$350/night), four per diems (\$50/day), and a local travel/incidental allowance of \$100.

Equipment justification: No equipment funds are requested.

Supplies justification: As detailed in Table BJ-4, OKDHS requests \$87,500 in supplies funds (\$49,000 for OKDHS and \$38,500 for OPSR). OSDE will contribute \$18,200 to Supplies expenses with non-federal funds.

Table BJ-4. PDG Supplies Expenses

<i>Supply Category:</i> Description	Base / Annual Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base / Annual Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
<i>Office Supplies:</i> OKDHS requests office supplies (technology, desks, office expenses and supplies) for 7 staff @ \$7,000. OPSR requests office supplies for 5.5 staff @ \$7,000	\$49,000	\$38,500	\$0
<i>OSDE Computer Supplies:</i> OSDE will provide computers to the 2 Early Childhood Specialists @ \$2,000.	\$0	\$0	\$4,000
<i>OSDE Office Supplies:</i> OSDE will provide office supplies to 2 Early Childhood Specialists @ \$150/month for 12 months	\$0	\$0	\$3,600
<i>OSDE Cell Phone Supplies:</i> OSDE will provide computers to the 2 Early Childhood Specialists @ \$300.	\$0	\$0	\$600
<i>OSDE Training Supplies:</i> OSDE will provide training materials to the 2 Early Childhood Specialists @ \$10,000 total.	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
Total Supplies	\$49,000	\$38,500	\$18,200

Contractual justification: OKDHS and OPSR will contract with service providers throughout Oklahoma to support implementation of the PDG project. Base operating funds in the amount of

\$8,993,926 are being requested for contractual items (Table BJ-5). OKDHS will contract for the essential Activity One - Needs Assessment Update which will include an examination of suspension and expulsions in Oklahoma, Activity Two - Strategic Plan Update, the Program Project Evaluation Plan, Activity Three - Public Engagement Campaign, the implementation support and training for the Pyramid Model (Activities Four and Six) at 80 sites, and a Workforce Study. OPSR will enter into multiple contracts, either for services, or to enhance existing initiatives, to achieve PDG Project Activities. OSDE will support two contracts with non-federal funds. Please refer to Project Timeline and Milestones to see the contracts, below, by Activity and timeframe for execution.

Table BJ-5. PDG Contractual Expenses

	Base / Annual Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base / Annual Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
<i>OKDHS Contracts</i>			
Contract: Needs Assessment Update	\$350,000	\$0	\$0
Contract: Strategic Plan Update	\$150,000	\$0	\$0
Contract: Project Evaluation	\$500,000	\$0	\$0
Contract: Public Engagement Campaign (Activity Family)	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0
Contract: Pyramid Model Implementation Sites/PD at 80 sites	\$969,876	\$0	\$0
Contract: Workforce Study	100,000	\$0	\$0
OKDHS – Recipient Subtotal	\$3,068,876	\$0	\$0
<i>OPSR Contracts</i>			
Contract: Community Coordinators and 3 Local Level Public Awareness Campaign	\$0	\$875,050	\$0
Contract: Family Support Specialists – one FSS in each rural region, 2 FSSs in Oklahoma City and 2 FSSs in Tulsa	\$0	\$1,200,000	\$0
Contract: OCCY Parent Partnership Board for expansion and training	\$0	\$245,000	\$0
Contract: Reach Out and Read in Oklahoma City and rural expansion	\$0	\$900,000	\$0
Contract: Transition Summit Expansion	\$0	\$50,000	\$0
Contract: Early Learning Inventory	\$0	\$715,000	\$0
Contract: Infant Early Childhood Mental Health for consultations in child care settings	\$0	\$750,000	\$0
Contract: MIECHV Innovative Pilot – OUHSC	\$0	\$150,000	\$0
Contract: Workforce Support Pilot – subsidized child care for the ECCE workforce, telehealth and teletherapy	\$0	\$750,000	\$0
Contract: Translation Services	\$0	\$100,000	\$0
Contract: Developmental Monitoring/LTSAE –	\$0	\$90,000	\$0

Oklahoma Autism Center/OUHSC			
Contract: Part C Data Analyst, Equity Specialization	\$0	\$100,000	\$0
OSDE Contract: Grant Management Software to set up and manage all awards. Includes development and set up.	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
OSDE Contract: LEA awards	\$0	\$0	\$250,000
OPSR – Subrecipient Subtotal	\$0	\$5,925,050	\$260,000
Total Contractual	\$3,068,876	\$5,925,050	\$260,000

Other justification: As detailed in Table BJ-6, OKDHS requests \$147,375 in base operating funds for Other expenses \$63,825 for OKDHS and 83,550 for OPSR. OSDE will also contribute \$567,604 in non-federal share (NFS) to support Other.

Table BJ-6. Other Expenses

	Base / Annual Operating OKDHS (recipient)	Base / Annual Operating OPSR (subrecipient)	NFS
<i>Local Travel: 7 OKDHS staff * 450 miles per month * \$.625/mile. 5.5 OPSR staff * 200 miles per month * \$.625/mile. 2 OSDE staff * 1,000 miles per month * \$.625/mile</i>	\$23,625	\$8,250	\$15,000
<i>OKDHS Rent: Based on historic costs. \$3,000 * 12 months</i>	\$36,000	\$0	\$0
<i>OKDHS Cell Phone Stipend: 7 staff * \$50/month (12)</i>	\$4,200	\$0	\$0
<i>OPSR Accounting Services: \$6,000/month * 12 months</i>	\$0	\$72,000	\$0
<i>OPSR Cell Phone Stipends: \$50 per month * 5.5 staff</i>	\$0	\$3,300	\$0
<i>OSDE Mifi Internet Connectors: 3 @ \$75/month * 12 months</i>	\$0	\$0	\$2,700
<i>OSDE Teacher Stipends: Stipends for work outside school hours to provide feedback on new ELI platform for evaluation and refinement. 200 teachers/year * \$100/day (in all) * 3 days/year</i>	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
<i>OSDE Professional Development Stipends: PD on use of ELI platform. 500 teachers * 2 days each * \$100/day</i>	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
<i>OSDE Cell Phones: 3 staff * 12 months * \$100/month</i>			\$3,600
Total	\$75,750	\$83,550	\$151,300

Indirect justification: OKDHS will apply its indirect rate of 16% to its portion of the federal request (\$4,800,000) for a total of \$767,999 in indirect costs. OPSR will apply the de minimis rate of 10% to its portion of the federal request (\$7,200,000) in the amount of \$720,000. OSDE will contribute its indirect portion (13.9% IDR) of the nonfederal project costs (\$627,300) to the project in the amount of \$87,195.

Amount to be Spent on Identified Activities: As described above, PDG funding will support an Evaluation Manager (\$75,000), Evaluation Specialist (\$65,000), and contract for the Evaluation Plan (\$500,000), for a total \$640,000 of allocated for the PPEP; this is 5.3% of the total federal request. The Program Performance Evaluation Plan section provides additional detail about these activities. Travel costs (\$11,000) have been allocated for four staff from OKDHS and one staff member from OPSR to attend a 3-day meeting in Washington, DC (described in the Travel justification).

Non-Federal Match: OKDHS’s NFS plan includes \$3,998,963 in contributions to the PDG effort in non-federal funds. (Table BJ-8). The line-item descriptions for NFS are included within the object class category tables above, as appropriate, and are described further below.

Table BJ-7. HS Non-Federal Share Budget Summary

Cost Category	Description/Source	Total NFS
Personnel	OSDE will support the personnel costs of 64 early childhood teachers and 2 Early Childhood Specialists. The teachers expand the access to care and the Specialists enhance the quality of care. OPSR will contribute some of its personnel costs to the PDG project using non-federal funds.	\$2,599,719
Fringe	OSDE and OPSR will support the fringe expenses associated with their in-kind personnel with non-federal funds.	\$882,749
Supplies	OPSR will contribute supplies needed by the Early Childhood Specialists to the PDG project with non-federal funds.	\$18,200
Contractual	OSDE will support two contracts (grants management software and LEA awards) with non-federal funds.	\$260,000
Other	OSDE will contribute, with non-federal funds, the cost of Other items.	\$151,300
Indirect	OSDE will contribute its non-federal portion of indirect costs (13.9%).	\$87,195
Total		\$3,999,191