

OKFutures: A Five-Year Vision for Oklahoma’s Youngest Children

Findings from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) partnered with the Urban Institute to conduct a **needs assessment** and **strategic plan** as part of a federal grant awarded to the state of Oklahoma by the US Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families in December 2018.

The needs assessment and strategic plan are **based on input from 389 people**, including family and community members, state agency leaders, providers, and OPSR Board and committee members.

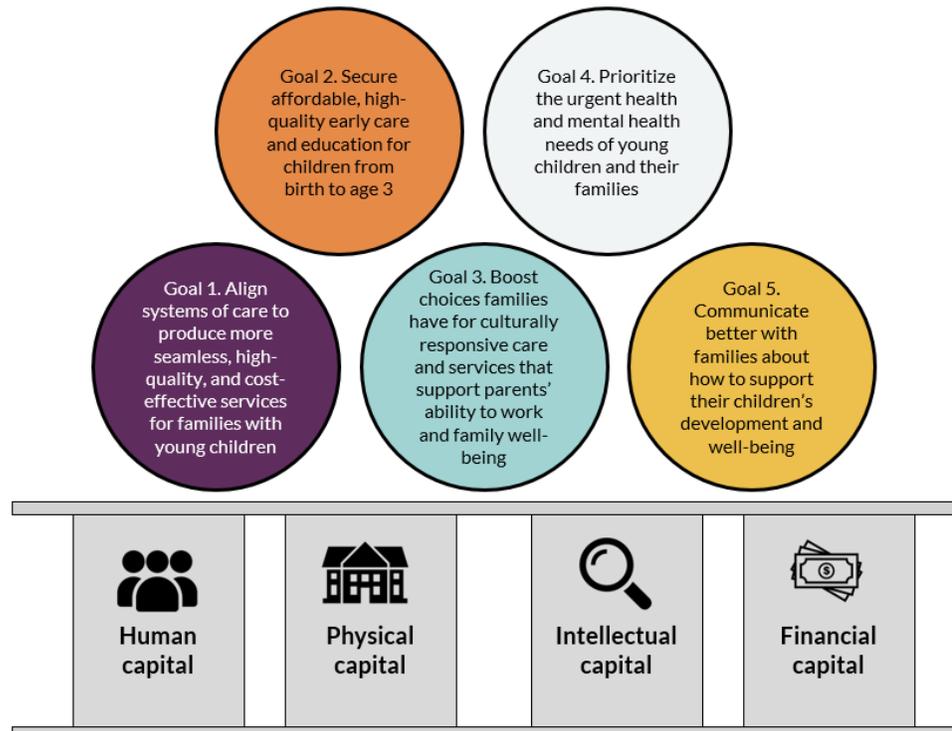
The strategic planning process also included **11 community conversations**, **6 OPSR Board meetings**, **20 OKFutures committee meetings**, and **5 governor and cabinet secretary meetings**.

OKFutures seeks to ensure that all of Oklahoma’s infants, toddlers, and preschoolers will be prepared to live healthy, happy, and successful lives by developing the capacity of families, communities, public agencies, and private organizations to provide children from birth to age 5 equitable and seamless access to the physical, emotional, and educational supports they need to thrive.

The OKFutures strategic plan targets the following outcomes:

- All children meet optimum health and developmental milestones upon entry to school
- All families are able to provide safe, positive, and nurturing environments for children
- All children and their families live in healthy and supportive communities
- Oklahomans benefit from the efficient use of tax dollars and a healthy, productive workforce

The plan has five goals to address urgent priorities, especially for vulnerable children and families. It also includes four “pillars” for long-term success.



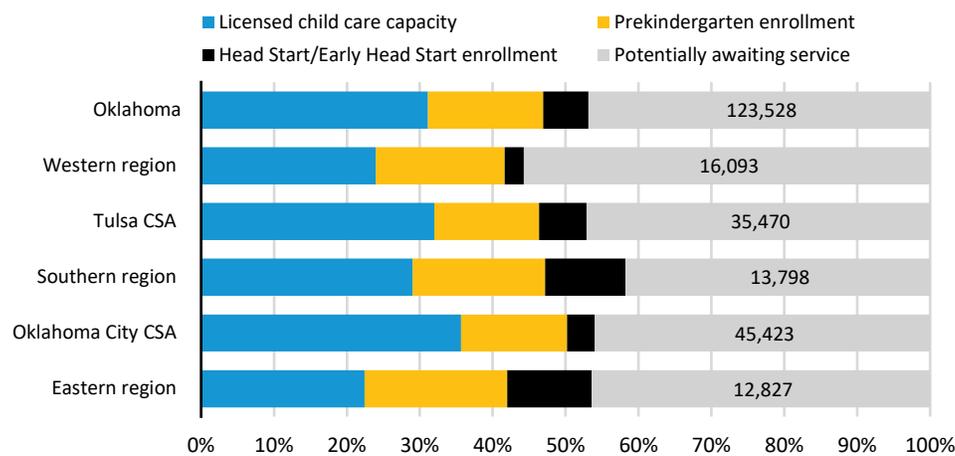
WHAT NEEDS DOES THE STRATEGIC PLAN INTEND TO MEET?

To inform the OKFutures strategic plan, the Urban Institute conducted a statewide needs assessment of Oklahoma’s early childhood mixed delivery system. The goal: to describe the current landscape of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and to assess unmet need in ECCE, health, and family supports. The needs assessment draws on multiple methods and data sources, including existing needs assessments and related documents, census and administrative data, parent and provider insights, and rapid-response surveys of key stakeholders.

Key findings from the document:

- While Oklahoma’s universal prekindergarten program ranks highly on quality and accessibility for 4-year-olds, about 124,000 children in Oklahoma, who are not yet eligible for kindergarten, are not being served by one of the three primary ECCE programs.

Potential Gaps in Early Care and Education Availability for Young Children



- Cost and inadequate supply are major barriers to child care.
- High-quality ECCE programs are more difficult to access for families of infants and toddlers (from birth to age three) who live in rural areas, need care during nontraditional hours, or lack transportation.
- Children from low- and lower-middle-income families or who are black, Latinx, or Native American face increased difficulty accessing high-quality ECCE programs and are less likely to be prepared for kindergarten. Their families are more likely to experience health, mental health, and substance abuse issues and to lack nutrition and income supports that promote healthy child development and allow them to succeed in ECCE programs and beyond.
- The Oklahoma Early Childhood Program, Educare, and Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships offer models for quality, affordability, collaboration with health and family support programs, and transition supports.
- Realizing the goals of OKFutures will require more interagency collaboration and data that can be disaggregated by program, child, and family characteristics.

COMPONENTS OF OKLAHOMA’S ECCE MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

1. Universal prekindergarten
2. Head Start/Early Head Start
3. American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start/Early Head Start
4. Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships
5. Educare
6. Oklahoma child care
7. Tribal child care
8. State-administered home visiting
9. Tribal home visiting
10. IDEA Part B and Part C
11. Child Guidance Program
12. Other components, including license-exempt child care providers, nutrition programs, health services, and faith- and community-based organizations

The OKFutures needs assessment can be found at <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/okfutures-needs-assessment>. The OKFutures strategic plan can be found at <https://www.okschoolreadiness.org/okfutures/strategic-plan>.