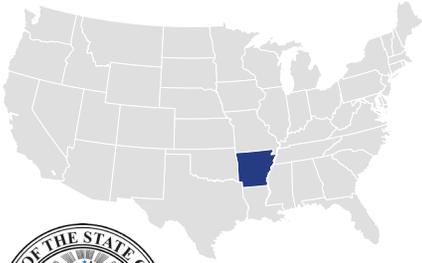


# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

## Arkansas





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

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

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

## General Information

1. PR/Award #: S419B150025 2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Project Title: 84.419 B Preschool Development Grants-Expansion

4. Grantee Name: Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

5. Grantee Address: 700 Main Street

City: Little Rock State: Arkansas Zip: 72201

6. Project Director Name: Tonya Williams

Title: Director of Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Phone #: 501-320-8953 Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: Tonya.Williams@dhs.arkansas.gov

## Reporting Period Information

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

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

Budget Period	Federal Grant Funds	Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share)
a. Previous Budget Period	\$14,993,000.00	\$8,204,374.00
b. Current Budget Period	\$15,275,434.00	\$8,204,374.00
c. Entire Project Period (For Final Performance Reports only)		

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

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

## 10. Performance Measures Status

- a. Are complete data on performance measures for the current budget period included in the Project Status Chart?  Yes  No
- b. If no, when will the data be available and submitted to the Department? 07/30/2017



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

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

Grantee State: AR

PR/Award #: S419B150025

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

The State of Arkansas has utilized the Preschool Development Grant funds to expand the current state funded preschool program, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program, by 1,364 slots and improve an additional 1,506 currently state funded slots. This is an increase over Year 1 by 126 expansion slots and 106 improvement slots. The State enrolled 92% of the enrollment opportunities provided by the Preschool Development Grant. During Year 3, the State will continue to provide additional resources and technical assistance to sub-grantees that focus on eliminating service barriers for children and families and strong recruitment efforts.

The State has continued to build upon and strengthen its robust early child and education (ECE) system. Use of the funds, combined with funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, have resulted in the completion of the following projects: 1) Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months adopted by the AR Early Childhood Commission in April 2016 and approved by the AR State Board of Education; 2) A Family Engagement Framework and state infrastructure; and 3) Connection of the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators with the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards for Teachers. Because of the changes in the State's procurement requirements, the selection and piloting of the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is targeted to begin in Fall 2017. These projects have primarily been funded by the Kellogg grant, supplemented by existing state funded resources (e.g. Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF), Arkansas Department of Education Funds). In addition to these projects, the State utilizes funding from the Preschool Development grant to: implement statewide training promoting relationship/ leadership based practices; develop statewide training for the Child Development and Early Learning Standards with plans to roll out the training to programs during 2017 and implement the State's system of monitoring and continuous improvement. A portion of the PDG funding was dedicated to support the revision of the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to specify the qualifications and ongoing development required for early care and education professionals. However, the PDG funds were not used as the subcommittee located resources via a national expert that is using their organization's funding to assist AR.

Arkansas recognizes that a well-educated and qualified workforce is critical to nurturing the learning and development of young children, particularly those with high needs. Arkansas has utilized funding provided by the Preschool Development Grant to provide support the expansion of the Powerful Interactions Program to Early Childhood Education providers. Since the Fall of 2016, ECE providers continue to participate in the staff development for the Powerful Interactions Program. Programs funded by the Preschool Development Grant have been attending this training and will continue into the upcoming year.

The State agrees to the implementation of a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment, and working through the procurement process for selection is underway. The new KEA plan aligns with the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards, is culturally and linguistically appropriate, targets sound measurement properties, and intends to provide strength based reports for parents, teachers, and administrators. The State has proposals for agencies to assist in the completion of the KEA and is targeting roll out in the upcoming school year. Until this is complete, the Qualls continues to be the KEA being used and the ability to separate the data of the children from PDG is proving to be challenging or nonexistent at this time. Because of the changes in the State's procurement requirements, the selection and piloting of the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is targeted to begin in Fall 2017. New procurement requirements and practices were being refined for implementation with ongoing adjustments to the procedures and process resulting in the delay to roll out the new instrument of KEA. When the KEA was vetted out for a bid, a suitable vendor was not located resulting in

additional bid process.

The State has completed the Family Engagement guide, which provides supports for early childhood programs in building a family engagement system. The guide consists of the state's definition for family engagement, guiding principles, brain development, benefits, pyramid framework, strategies for each of the family engagement outcomes, models for continuous improvements, and a state-wide resource list. A training DVD is available to assist programs with the use of the Family Engagement Guide.

Challenges and Lessons Learned: In the first year, the notice of the initial grant award was in the middle of the year when all programs were up and operational creating a push to get staff in place, conducting subgrantees selection and clear implementation plans in place. There were unexpected challenges of rolling out the funding to subgrantees via contracts. At the same time new procurement requirements and practices were being refined for implementation with ongoing adjustments to the procedures. At the beginning of the second year, the procurement challenges have been much less and the subgrantees are embracing the PDG funds to assist in improving their state funded preschool program and expanding school readiness services to more children in the community. The new procurement requirements are in place and while the process of submitting invoices for services rendered is new to the local educational agencies, this seems to be working out favorably.

When the PDG grant was drafted, Arkansas made a conscious decision to require higher educational levels or a minimum of an associate degree in early childhood education for the paraprofessional to assist the teacher and to enhance greater opportunities for programs to impact the developmental readiness level for children. While this sounds like a good concept to improve the teacher pipeline, fourteen of the seventeen PDG subgrantees have struggled to locate and employ these individuals with an associate degree in early childhood education within their communities across the state and this included the areas where institutions of higher education had a degreed program to offer. All state funded preschool programs were already required to have a minimum of a child development associate (CDA) credential for paraprofessionals and when the state accepted the PDG funds, there was no way to anticipate a limited number of individuals with an associate degree to fulfill this grant requirement. Also, some paraprofessionals with a CDA credential working in the state funded preschool program and in many cases, had been employed with the program for many years, did not want to seek a higher credential resulting in programs having to decide to seek a waiver from the state or risk losing a valuable and well trained preschool paraprofessional. Although this has been a struggle for the subgrantees, the state encourages subgrantees to take advantage of supporting their paraprofessional employee with training opportunities including tuition assistance from PDG. All lead teachers meet the PDG program staff qualification requirement of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State - approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood.

Other challenges include developing the job description or how to utilize the family services personnel. Job descriptions were gathered from multiple sources and provided to subgrantees to assist in establishing the position and how to assist those individuals selected on the expectations to implement services for the families and their children. Technical assistance was also provided at a state PDG meeting and those subgrantees that have a clear grasp on the job description and expectation provided mentor-ship to those who were struggling. Because this was a new type of position for the local education agencies, which is the majority of the PDG subgrantees, the administration had to create the availability of this position. The second year has proven to have less issues with how to fully utilize the family services personnel and some subgrantees have work within their internal administration to have this service available more broadly to the state funded preschool services. Clearly this position has been more invaluable to the program than initially expected.

Conducting dental screenings was a difficult concept for most of the local education agencies to understand how they needed to be involved and then attempting to locate dentists in some of the subgrantees' locations to provide this service was challenging. Comments paraphrased from a subgrantee wrote, that although this has been a timely process, frustrating to obtain parental consent and providers hesitant to commit working with them, this has been a new experience getting to know their community better and allowing them to serve the children and their families. Information is provided to the subgrantees on mobile dental clinics that may be available to visit their geographic location from AR Children's Hospital. This has been helpful to those subgrantees who can

benefit in the mobile dental clinics traveling radius.

Recruitment to enroll children was easier for the second year as compared to the first year. The PDG classrooms have been stable and consistent with the exception of one subgrantee, which is a community Head Start Service. At the request of the Executive Director with the agreement from the Board of Directors and the Policy Council, the program was unable to sustain the services with the amount of funding they received to do PDG and/or ABC. Additionally the Executive Director indicated a need to change and focus of services for particular age children, this program has indicated a plan to relinquish the state funded preschool program as well as the PDG services consisting of 16 improvement and 29 expansion slots. Until written notice is received, technical assistance has been offered to assist with their recruitment process. This change may result in nearby subgrantees picking up the children that may need services in this locale after notifying our Project Officer to confirm the relinquished program and request for approval to offer services through another existing subgrantee.



**U.S. Department of Education**  
**PDG Annual Performance Report**  
**Grant Status Form**  
**Explanation of Progress (524B Section A)**  
Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: AR PR/Award #: S419B150025

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

**1. Project Objective**

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

As of December 1, 2016, the State of Arkansas enrolled 2,691 of the allotted 2,870 eligible children in high need communities funded by the PDG grant. Programs are continuing to recruit children for the current 232 enrollment vacancies located throughout the 17 agencies and 85 sites. The areas with vacancies are being reviewed and evaluated based on the state data matrix to determine reallocation to programs who are in need of additional enrollment opportunities within their communities.

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

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

As of December 1, 2016, the State of Arkansas served 12.7% of eligible children with disabilities in High-Quality Preschool Programs. All subgrantees of the Preschool Development Grant must adhere to the state funded preschool program, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program, *Rules and Regulations*. The *ABC Rules and Regulations* require that within 45 days of enrollment, a child shall receive a routine annual developmental screening to determine individual needs. The purpose of the screening is to identify developmental delays and/or educational deficiencies. Children so identified shall be referred to Special Education within seven calendar days of the date of screening. Programs must comply with State and Federal laws for children with disabilities. The developmental screening must include, at a minimum, the following areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and developmental milestones. The ABC/PDG Program Specialists review the developmental screenings during regular monitoring visits and/or on-line desk reviews to ensure policies and procedures are being implemented and followed accordingly. The data specialists monitor the State's data system to ensure that the subgrantees are entering the data accordingly and following through with services.

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

During the 2016-2017 program year, the State of Arkansas expanded the state funded preschool program by an additional 1,364 enrollment opportunities to four year olds equating to an 11% increase. This allowed an additional 68 high-quality preschool classrooms in Arkansas' highest need communities. DCCECE provides ongoing technical assistance for providers regarding recruitment and enrollment of children for the state funded preschool and PDG programs.

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

During the 2016 program year, 20,443 children (three and four year olds) were served with funds from the State Preschool Program, 33% of those served within the high need communities. There were a total of 12,334 four year old children funded solely by the State Preschool Program - Arkansas Better Chance (ABC), 1,470 were funded with a combination of state preschool funds and PDG funds, and 1,364 were funded solely by PDG. Due to the PDG grant, the State of Arkansas was able to increase enrollment opportunities to four year olds by 11%. The State has been flat funded therefore, there has not been a change in enrollment for the State Preschool Program.

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

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

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

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

Also, please describe, if applicable:

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

State of Arkansas ACT 49 of 2003: Section 4 requires that all children who are enrolled into the state funded preschool program be assessed upon enrollment in the program and continue until each child completes the fourth grade, so long as the child is enrolled into a public school within the state. The assessments provide an indication of each child's school readiness and is directly aligned with the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework/Early Learning Guidelines (which were revised and approved in 2016 changed to the Child Development and Early Learning Standards) and serves to promote curriculum development and instructional methods.

The current assessment tool for the state funded preschool program is, Work Sampling, and must be implemented within all state funded preschool programs. Work Sampling measures the following domains of school readiness: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, art, and physical development. All child development staff, are required, *ABC Rules and Regulations (11.10)*, to attend Work Sampling training during their first year of employment.

The AR Department of Education representatives have been working on a state subcommittee with a number of Early Childhood professionals to revise the the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist (KRIC) and to align with the Child Development and Early Learning Standards as well as align with the States Kindergarten

Standards including standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Physical Development. The KRIC has been completed by the subcommittee and the intent now is to identify a new instrument for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). Until this is complete, the decision by the AR Department of Education is to continue using the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) as a basic instrument for Kindergarten teachers to gauge where on the developmental spectrum those children entering Kindergarten. The QELI is an assessment tool for the use in primary grades to identify student development in six behavioral characteristics related to school learning. It is a "snapshot" of the child's skills entering kindergarten and early first grade. The QELI helps teachers observe and record information about cognitive knowledge and classroom behaviors in six key areas:

- o *General Knowledge* -- Common information and general facts expected of young children
- o *Oral Communication* -- How well a student communicates ideas, describes what has been seen or heard, or asks about things
- o *Written Language* -- Recognition and use of written words
- o *Math Concepts* -- Understanding and use of beginning mathematical ideas and processes
- o *Work Habits* -- Manner in which students seek and respond to learning opportunities
- o *Attentive Behavior* -- Ability to sustain focus on classroom activities

The Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist (KRIC) has also been aligned with the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI). Per state regulations, the QELI is administered within the first 45 days of the school year, although results are not typically available to teachers until as early as November or as late as January. At the time of its adoption, few options Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) tools were available. However, as an assessment tool, the QELI has had limitations for its usefulness in comparing students across the state since it is not a standardized assessment, it only has moderate internal consistency, and little formal research has been conducted to evaluate its usefulness in assessing children's Kindergarten readiness. In recognition of the QELI's limitations, the Arkansas Department of Education is in the process of procuring a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment for implementation in academic year 2017-2018 or Year 3 of the PDG grant. Cohort progress will be measured longitudinally, but with the change in KEA, comparisons across cohorts will be more difficult, however general kindergarten readiness comparisons should continue to be possible.

Arkansas will continue to make progress towards this GPRA performance measure, increasing the number and percentage of children in the high-need communities served by the grant that are ready for Kindergarten, by continuing to assess QELI outcomes. Academic year 2016-2017 QELI data has been requested from the Arkansas Department of Education to examine PDG Cohort 1 Kindergarten outcomes. Beyond the scope of this GPRA performance measure, assessment data for later grades will also be collected as each cohort progresses through grade school to examine the longitudinal impact of the PDG, as well as data on non-cognitive indicators, such as attendance and discipline. These non-cognitive indicators are an important component of assessing the long-term impact of early childhood education. Lifelong success is not measured by a test, but rather by showing up and getting one's work done.

PDG programs and children will be identified within the ABC/QELI Report in order to evaluate the impact of the grant on child outcomes. PDG dollars are being used for both child level and program level support, and this distinction will be made in evaluating PDG impact. Additionally, as the statewide longitudinal data system expands, there is the expectation that program impact comparisons will be made across various early childhood education models (i.e. Head Start, Private PreK, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community, HIPPIY, Even Start, etc.) All student outcomes will be measured using the state's KEA, additional assessment data, and non-cognitive indicators of success. Both student and program impact will be considered in determining PDG effectiveness in improving student outcomes in high-need communities.

The State will continue to make progress in the reporting of school readiness data to the State, in order to provide an alignment with birth to kindergarten and kindergarten through third grade. By way of the AR Governor's office, an agreement is in place on measuring how children are performing as they exit preschool and move into Kindergarten up while complying with FERPA. Tracking the children in the PDG programs is being planned for the upcoming year to determine the results.

**For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:**

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

N/A - Arkansas was awarded the Preschool Development Grant - Expansion funds.

## Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

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

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

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

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

The State has continued to build upon and strengthen its robust early child and education (ECE) system. Use of the funds, combined with funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, have supported the following on-going projects: 1) State Child Development and Early Learning Standards that were adopted by Early Childhood Commission April 2016 and approved by the AR State Board of Education; 2) Completion and implementation of the Family Engagement Framework and the roll out of staff development and state resource materials January 2016; 3) Kindergarten Entry Assessment and Checklist - approved by the Early Childhood Commission January 2016; 4) Currently pending selection and piloting a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment- Fall 2017. The projects are primarily funded by the Kellogg Foundation grant, supplemented by existing state funded resources (e.g., CCDF, Arkansas Department of Education Funds). In addition to these projects, the State planned to utilize funding from the Preschool Development Grant to: revise the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, implement statewide training promoting relationship based practices; and strengthen the State's system of monitoring and continuous improvement. In kind funds were dedicated to support the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, therefore the planned the PDG funds were not used to support this project as initially intended but will be used to provide staff development once the framework is approved.

Arkansas recognizes that a well-educated and qualified workforce is critical to nurturing the learning and development of young children, particularly those with high needs. Arkansas has utilized funding provided by the Preschool Development Grant to provide support the expansion of the Powerful Interactions Program to Early Childhood Education providers. Fall 2016, ECE/PDG providers had access to register for the Powerful Interactions staff development. Programs funded by the Preschool Development Grant are required to attend the Powerful Interactions Program. Approximately 47% of the PDG programs have attended and the remaining programs are targeted to attend the scheduled staff development during Year 3.

The State is in the initial stages, seeking input and recommendations for the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The new KEA will be aligned with the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards, will be culturally and linguistically appropriate, will have sound measurement properties, and will provide strength based reports for parents, teachers, and administrators. The State will seek requests for qualifications from vendors to assist in the completion of the KEA that is currently out for procurement bid. There will be a KEA Assessment Vendor Fair where LEAs will be invited to attend and obtain details on the state approved and funded instruments/tools that LEAs will select for implementation for the next three years. This will be a screening tool that will include kindergarten through second grade. The target is implementation for Fall 2017. Plans are in place with the Arkansas Department of Education to conduct the longitudinal study as children move from Preschool through elementary. The Kindergarten Readiness Indicator Checklist (KRIC) is being provided to all parents who have children entering Kindergarten.

The State has completed the Family Engagement guide, which provides supports for early child programs in building a family engagement system. The guide consists of the state's definition for family engagement, guiding principles, brain development, benefits, pyramid framework, strategies for each of the family engagement outcomes, models for continuous improvements, and a state-wide resources inclusive of a training DVD. The

first statewide Train the Trainer session was held in March 2016. In August 2016, the PDG Coordinators and Family Service Managers attended the three day Strengthening Families staff development. All of the PDG subgrantees participated in the Arkansas Guide for Promoting Family Engagement, TIPS (Teaching Important Parenting Skills) - curriculum that supports family engagement, and Inclusion of Children with Disabilities October 2016. The Family Services Managers received materials to support working with families individually and groups.

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

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

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

- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that
- promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development;  
and
  - Evidence-based health and safety standards.

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

The following elements assist in establishing program quality through High Staff Qualifications:

*ABC Program Rules and Regulations* require the lead teacher shall hold a standard Arkansas teacher license with P-4 certification. Non-public school based or non-educational cooperative based ABC programs may hire a non-certified teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. 100% of all classrooms funded with PDG funds employ a teacher with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway. Arkansas also encourages providers to employ a paraprofessional with a minimum of an associates degree. A decision was made by the Arkansas Department of Education [ADE] and approved by the ADE State Board to replace the P4 certification with the B5 [Birth to Five Years of Age] credential. The B5 credential is yet to be fully implemented statewide resulting in a decrease in availability of teachers trained in early childhood education. Therefore, this rule as well as all ABC Rules and Regulations will be revised and promulgated in the upcoming year.

High-Quality Professional Development: Between July 1 and June 30 each year, all ABC teachers and paraprofessionals shall participate in a minimum of thirty (30) hours of staff development on topics pertinent to early childhood education and approved by DCCECE. Teachers and paraprofessionals shall be required to receive training in the following areas: Arkansas Early Childhood Frameworks, PreK ELLA (Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas), INDEX (Math and Science for Young Children), Social/Emotional Learning in Arkansas, Work Sampling Online, COPA, Special Needs, including process, Special Education rules and regulations and IDEA.

A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1: *ABC Rules and Regulations (10.02)* states the adult-to-child ratio in any classroom with ABC children shall not exceed 1:10 (3 years-5 years).

A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications: *ABC Rules and Regulation (10.01)* states the group size in any classroom with ABC children shall not exceed 20 children for ages 3-5 years or the classroom's licensing capacity, whichever is less.

A Full-Day program: *ABC Rules and Regulations (9.06)* states that for each child enrolled, ABC programs shall provide a minimum of 7 hours per day, 178 days per year for instruction.

Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities: *ABC Rules and Regulations (14.07 & 14.08)* states for any ABC child also receiving special education services, appropriate staff from the Education Cooperative or school district shall have access to the child at mutually agreeable times during the program day in order to provide services outlined in the child's IEP. For any ABC child requiring the intervention services of special education, the ABC program shall collaborate with special education professionals to ensure each party has access to necessary information to provide the appropriate services. Early Education Special Education teachers shall have access to any information pertaining to a child receiving special education that is in the possession of the ABC program that would be necessary for reviewing and evaluating the child's progress in the general education setting. Access to proprietary information on the child shall be on a need-to-know basis.

Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction: *ABC Rules and Regulations (13.01)* states all early childhood programs funded by ABC monies shall be developmentally appropriate and individualized to meet the needs of each student enrolled. The following references shall be utilized to determine developmental appropriateness: *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, and *Arkansas Early Childhood Frameworks*.

*ABC Rules and Regulations (13.06)* states all programs must utilize a curriculum approved by DCCECE. A list of approved curriculum models will be made available by DCCECE on an annual basis. A program wishing to use a curriculum not on the list may request, in writing to DCCECE, consideration of an additional curriculum. Program coordinators shall ensure teachers have adequate training on curriculum.

Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities: *ABC Rules and Regulations (13.03)* states each classroom shall be equipped with toys, books and play apparatus to take care of the needs of the total group and to provide each child with a variety of activities through the day. A variety of equipment shall be accessible from low shelves to children of all ages and shall be

arranged in learning centers.  
*ABC Rules and Regulations (13.04)* states the program shall be individualized to meet the needs of each student enrolled. Each curriculum model and the actual classroom practice will be assessed using the applicable environmental rating scale to ensure the model is developmentally appropriate.

Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff. The Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") entered into by and between The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE-"Lead Agency") and the ABC Grantee-"Subgrantees", articulates specific roles and responsibilities in support of the State in its implementation of an approved Preschool Development Grant-High Quality Preschool Program Expansion Grant (HQPP). Implementing Instructional staff salaries comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff is an element within the MOU signed agreement.

Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement: ABC Programs are monitored in three ways: 1) through the Child Care Licensing adhering to minimum Child Care Licensing regulations; 2) ABC program monitoring staff or compliance to ABC standards; 3) Arkansas Better Beginnings (AR-BB), the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which includes classroom assessments using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS); and 4) Work Sampling Assessment of all children. ABC program specialists conduct unannounced visits each year and utilize a detailed multi-item protocol that measures compliance to all sections of the ABC program standards.

The Family Service Managers have been instrumental in extending accessibility of on-site and comprehensive services for children and establishing community partnerships to promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development. The FSMs have a maximum caseload of 40 PDG children and families. They work to ensure parents have the resources they need at home and for success of their children at school. The FSMs work with parents on translating materials for for ELL families, job resumes, securing jobs, insurance for children, applying to college and vocational schools, single parent families, family abuse, and Kindergarten registration. This is accomplished through parent visits on-site, FSMs home visits with children and families and community partnerships.

They have helped to organize parent activities throughout the year. Parents are invited to participate in activities with their child and school family. Some examples are a Winter Wonderland at a skating rink, Thanksgiving celebration, Mr. AI concert, Health Fair, Mobile Literacy Program; Bess the Book Bus, on-site Lending Library, Painting with Parents, and Make and Take Math games.

ABC Rules and Regulation 6.02: Any program funded through ABC shall work in collaboration with DCCECE , ADE, local businesses and other early childhood providers (school districts, educational cooperatives, Head Start, HIPPIY, private and non-profit providers, etc.) to ensure that all eligible children are served in the most suitable environment. Regulation 9.01: All ABC classroom programs shall satisfy the requirements specified in The Child Care Licensing Act, Ark. Code Ann. 20-78-201 through 224 and rules and regulations enacted pursuant to these sections.

Through DHS, ABC, and ECERS standards for health and safety are set for pre-K classrooms. Audits by each program keep staff accountable for these standards. All programs maintain high ratings in Better Beginnings and ECERS. Developmental Screenings are completed prior to the child entering the program.

All children are screened for vision and hearing. Dental screenings are provided through local dentists and hygienists for all children. The local Educational Cooperatives assist with referrals for mental and behavioral concerns in children. The family service managers assist with screenings. All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR.

**Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA**

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

The enrollment at the end of Program Year 2 was 93.7% enrollment.  
The State enrolled 93.7% of the funded slots with a total of 2,870 eligible children.

	Improvement	Expansion
PDG Funds	\$2,460	\$7,830
Local Match (40%)	\$3,240	\$5,220
State Funded Preschool (per-child allocation)	\$4,860	
Total Cost Per Slot	\$13,050	\$13,050

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

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

The DCCECE strives to build a strong working relationship with each of the the PDG/ABC providers to ensure it is reciprocal and collaborative to support the success of the provider partners. All subgrantees are afforded the opportunity to participate in all facets of staff development including but not limited to as follows: family engagement, effective communication, leadership development, classroom/behavioral management techniques and state resources, encourage support of employees- teachers, paraprofessionals, and/or family service managers to acquire and/or complete degreed/credential programs, access and use of the state data management system, grant/financial management.

Regulation 11.10:

Teachers and paraprofessionals shall be required to receive training in the following areas:

Arkansas Early Childhood or Infant/Toddler Education Frameworks

Pre-K ELLA (Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas)

INDEX ( Math and Science for Young Children)

Social/Emotional Learning in Arkansas

Work Sampling Online

COPA

Special Needs, including process, Special Education rules and regulations and IDEA

With the exception of annual Work Sampling training and updates, time frames for completing such requirements may vary with availability and access to the above trainings. DCCECE or ADE Special Education may mandate additional training subject to needs in various locations.

Training opportunities are phased in across all programs due to desire to keep the groups small and training more effective.

An additional activity that programs are encouraged to develop within their communities is the School Readiness Teams, which supports seamless transitions and long-term success of PreK and kindergarten between early learning settings, promoting collaborative relationships, and engaging in constructive data sharing initiatives. In addition to coordination of programs at the community-level, efforts have been made to include early childhood education staff in joint professional development and leadership opportunities. Joint professional development has allowed teachers to benefit from ongoing access to a highly qualified facilitator as well as the opportunity to receive feedback, advice, and support from their peers. Each team must have representatives in the categories as follows: PreK director and teacher; ABC teacher; Child Care (CCDF/voucher); Head Start; infant/toddler; Home Visiting; Special Education; principal; K teacher; and parent. The annual Collaborating for School Readiness Summit was held in November 2016. At the Summit a small grant of approximately \$1500 per team was made available to the School Readiness Teams via the Kellogg Foundation, to assist in supporting coordination and community collaboration on a team decided project. Additional details are provided in Section 4 Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum.

PDG program specialist and the PDG program manager provide ongoing technical assistance, assist in examining data and developing improvement plans, and encourage participation in appropriate professional developmental opportunities.

One of the most frequent TA request is providing assistance in working with children and their families regarding challenging behaviors/behavioral management. On July 1, 2016, Arkansas DHS/Division of Child Care and Early Education (DCCECE) launched the statewide program, BehaviorHelp, to provide support for child care providers to address and seek resolution for children who experience challenging behaviors. The purpose is to reduce suspensions and expulsions of young children and enhance their social and emotional development.

BehaviorHelp Process as follows:

1. A request form is submitted to staff in the DCCECE. It asks what behavior(s) the child care center or parents are noticing while the child is in the child care setting and provides contact information. The form is available at <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dccece/Pages/ChildCareAssistance.aspx>
2. DCCECE staff will contact the child care provider (or whoever submitted the form) directly to ask questions and learn more.
3. DCCECE staff might provide a helpful tool or tip to help support the teacher and child. The tips are designed to help adults deal with routine behaviors that young children experience such as tantrums, crying, kicking, biting, etc.
4. If more intensive assistance and support might be needed, DCCECE will make referrals to partner agencies who will assist teaching staff at the child care center.
  - This could be short-term technical assistance or longer-term mental health consultation or both
  - This could also involve staff training

DCCECE staff, technical assistance providers and mental health consultants all work together to understand the behavior concerns and provide the teacher and parent with tools to support the child. With the help and guidance of adults, over time children can learn the social and emotional skills needed for school success, including how to manage their feelings and behaviors.

Rarely there may be times when parents, teachers, technical assistance providers and consultants think that a child would benefit from services in a different setting. In this situation, the DCCECE can review the case with all parties and determine if a transition would be in the best interest of the child. This review must take place prior to moving the child to a new setting.

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

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

The State of Arkansas fosters relationship between PDG subgrantees and other early care and education programs to determine services currently being provided for children birth-5. Subgrantees are also working with their local School Readiness Teams, which were established in 2012, to assess and create goals for continuous quality improvement promoting a strong continuum of learning across state funded preschool, Head Start, home visiting, child care/CCDF, and public school settings.

The School Readiness Teams support seamless transitions and long-term success of PreK and kindergarten between early learning settings, promoting collaborative relationships, and engaging in constructive data sharing initiatives. In addition to coordination of programs at the community-level, efforts have been made to include early childhood education staff in joint professional development and leadership opportunities. Joint professional development has allowed teachers to benefit from ongoing access to a highly qualified facilitator as well as the opportunity to receive feedback, advice, and support from their peers.

November 2016, a small grant of approximately \$1500 per team was made available to the School Readiness Teams via the Kellogg Foundation, to assist in supporting coordination and community collaboration on a team decided project. The Teams have identified: team members and their affiliation; the top needs and challenges that are impacting the school readiness of young children; measurable and obtainable goals using the ESSA and Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards; action steps to address the identified needs and challenges building off the current work in early childhood; detailed time lines to complete each of the action steps; and data to measure progress for each goal. Teams have been working over the past several months to obtain the identified goals and will be expected to submit a report on the outcome and/or success.

Similar to the collaboration and joint learning opportunities of teachers, birth-third grade efforts will also focus on establishing and supporting teamwork among school principals and early care and education directors/administrators.

## Section A: Part C - Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

Year 2 (as of December 1, 2016) - 100% of the \$500,000, non-Federal matching funds had been obtained to support the implementation of its ambitious and achievable plan, which consists of Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards revision and implementation, Statewide Family Engagement Initiative, and the selection process to piloting the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. A private family foundation in Northwest Arkansas that has made an investment and commitment to PreK children in their locale. To date the foundation has made a financial commitment of \$972,000 that began in 2014. It is unknown the longevity of this commitment. DCCECE maintains a memorandum of agreement with the foundation to ensure the quality of the program through ongoing monitoring and technical assistance. Two of the PDG programs are eligible for these additional funds.

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

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

The State of Arkansas has fostered the relationships between PDG subgrantees and other early care and education programs to determine where children birth-5 currently being served. Subgrantees are also working with their local School Readiness Teams, which were established in 2012, to assess and create goals for continuous quality improvement promoting a strong continuum of learning across state funded preschool, Head Start, home visiting, child care/CCDF, and public school settings. The School Readiness Teams support transitions between early learning settings, promoting collaborative relationships, and engaging in constructive data sharing initiatives.

The School Readiness Teams support seamless transitions and long-term success of Pre-K and Kindergarten between early learning settings, promoting collaborative relationships, and engaging in constructive data sharing initiatives. In addition to coordination of programs at the community-level, efforts have been made to include early childhood education staff in joint professional development and leadership opportunities. Joint professional development has allowed teachers to benefit from ongoing access to a highly qualified facilitator as well as the opportunity to receive feedback, advice, and support from their peers.

Similar to the collaboration and joint learning opportunities of teachers, birth-third grade efforts will also focus on establishing and supporting teamwork among school principals and early care and education directors/administrators.

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

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

As of December 1, 2016, the State of Arkansas had met 93.7% of it's target for new high-quality preschool program slots. The State will implement new strategies, focused on the recruitment and enrollment of children, for the 2017-2018 program year to ensure that 100% of the new high-quality preschool slots are utilized for children in high need communities.

\$10,680,120 of the Preschool Development Grant (71%) has been allocated for the expansion of high-quality preschool slots.

## Section B: Budget Information

### Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

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

The state requested and received approval to carry over funds to the next year. Subgrantees did not invoice for the full allotted amount due to being unable to fulfill awarded slots. As a result, unused slots were reallocated to programs with a waiting list of eligible 4 year olds.

In some cases, Subgrantees utilized other funding sources to support the preschool services. CCDF, ABC, National School Lunch, and in some cases Title 1 funds, were used until later in the school year. Programs had a delayed start as the state was establishing a new procurement process.

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

No substantive changes are anticipated to the budget at this time.

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

DCCECE is working collaborative with a steering committee supported by state foundations and comprised of partners including parents, educators, civic leaders, business professionals and policy makers who are committed to helping every Arkansas student graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace. The committee has developed recommendations aimed at dramatically improving student achievement, closing the achievement gap and making Arkansas a leading state in education. Currently the committee is exploring additional funding of voluntary, high-quality PreK to all children in the state and are working daily to move the initiative forward. The belief of this group is to make sure our students start their academic career ahead and stay ahead from the beginning. It is known that students who have a strong start, become educated, productive members of the workforce.

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

Subgrantees did not invoice for the full allotted amount due to not able to fulfilling awarded slots. As a result, unused slots were reallocated to programs with a waiting list of eligible 4 year olds. In some cases, subgrantees utilized other funding sources to support the preschool services.

Subgrantees' program year operates in the states fiscal year from July 1 to June 30, therefore it is necessary to reconcile the difference between the state fiscal year [July-June] as compared to the end of year reporting for the PDG being January to December. The sub-recipients did not start on the PDG until August, beginning of 2015-2016 school program year. Subgrantees did not expend all their funds by December 31, 2016.