

# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

## Massachusetts





# 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 #: S419B150023                      2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Project Title: Massachusetts Preschool Expansion Grant

4. Grantee Name: MA Department of Early Education and Care

5. Grantee Address: 51 Sleeper St.

City: Boston    State: Massachusetts                      Zip: 02210

6. Project Director Name: Jocelyn Bowne

Title: Director of Research and Preschool Expansion Administration

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Email Address: jocelyn.bowne@state.ma.us

### 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	\$14,788,757.50	\$5,990,076.00
b. Current Budget Period		\$5,990,076.00
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? \_\_\_\_\_



# 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: MA

PR/Award #: S419B150023

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.

*“Teachers really love them like they are their own. My kid is ready to go back to school at the end of the day when we get home because she wants to see her friends and teachers. It's really great to see relationships between teachers and kids, and between kids.” PEG Parent*

*“I wish this was not just a grant. It should be offered to everyone. It shouldn't just be a few sites. We are not just a day care; we are not glorified babysitters. We are making sure these children are prepared to enter kindergarten in just a few months.” PEG Teacher*

## Overview of Progress:

During the first year and a half that programs funded by the Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) have been in operation, approximately 1600 children have been served. Of these children, about 1000 would have entered kindergarten without any early education experience, putting them at risk of starting school behind their peers. At the heart of Massachusetts' plan for the PEG was an effort to leverage local resources through public-private partnerships to develop high quality full-day full-year preschool programs with four primary agendas:

- Expand access to preschool for low income children who never before received any early education
- Create more integrated and aligned local systems of early education, birth to grade 3
- Develop the professionalism and skill of the early education workforce
- Build programs that are responsive to the needs of children and families

In each of these areas, Massachusetts has taken important strides and identified additional goals for improvement.

## Expanded Access

Of primary importance, 800 children participated in the PEG program during the first three months of year two. Sixty six percent of these children had had no prior early education experiences; children who, without the support this grant provides, would have entered kindergarten this September without any preschool experience. Eighty four percent of the first cohort of PEG children showed good levels of kindergarten readiness in literacy and math skills at the end of the program year, and eighty five percent and above were rated as meeting age expectations in key social emotional skills, suggesting that the PEG experience has provided these children an important opportunity to enter school on solid

footing in comparison to their peers. For teachers, it has been particularly motivating to work with large numbers of students new to school as the growth they saw was particularly salient. Finally, parents who have never before had an opportunity to send their child to school have been pleased with the opportunities the PEG program has provided for not only their child, but also for their own skill building. During focus groups, many parents commented on valuing the outreach around home reading and other home supports for learning the programs have provided. At the same time, some communities have found it difficult to fill all the available openings, suggesting that the program's goals need to be broader than just serving families without any prior preschool experience. Moving forward, programs will enroll a mix of children with and without prior experience allowing them more freedom to recruit families with a variety of needs.

#### Public-Private Partnerships in Service of Birth to Grade 3 Alignment

PEG funds have been invested in public-private partnerships to create new high quality full day, full year classrooms in the PEG communities. The grant now funds 48 classrooms across the five communities, all of which are led by a teacher with at least a Bachelor's degree, paid a salary commensurate with the public school and with class sizes between 10 and 20 and child-teacher ratios of no more than 10:1, frequently closer to 6:1 when a three educator per classroom model is implemented to provide staffing for a full-day program. Each community has developed a steering committee comprised of representatives from the Local Education Agency (LEA) and each Early Learning Provider (ELP), which have continued the collaborative planning process begun when programs were being designed. Issues of program alignment, community outreach and resource sharing have been of primary importance to these groups. As these groups have entered year two of the grant, the basic operations of each program have been defined and the collaborative leadership has begun to consider important program improvements. Each community relied on the expertise of local ELPs to get a quality program up and running in year one. The collaborative leadership focused on identifying the areas of alignment that would be required of all programs. These included attention to shared enrollment procedures, joint professional development and, in some cases, a shared curriculum. Once programs were operational, PEG communities were able to reflect on year one, considering the evaluation data and program successes and challenges, to plan revisions for year two. In determining how to build more aligned programming across ELPs and ensure that children's experiences best prepared them for kindergarten, communities began to consider new ways to collaborate. The relationship building and vision setting of year one laid a foundation for more intensive efforts to look honestly at the strengths and weaknesses of the program and continue to plan creatively around program improvements.

#### Stable and Professional Workforce

The PEG program recognizes that teachers are the cornerstone of the program; it is the teachers' skill at organizing the classroom environment, implementing effective curriculum, engaging in responsive and intellectually stimulating teacher-child interactions and connecting with parents that creates a high quality program. PEG programs have all committed to paying lead teachers' salaries commensurate with the public schools and bringing assistant and aide salaries to similar levels. Not only is this a grant requirement, but something that programs feel strongly will help attract highly qualified teachers and reduce turnover. In year one, classroom observations revealed moderate to high quality teacher-child interactions in most classrooms on three standardized measures. In the fall of year two only seventeen percent of the lead teachers (eight classrooms) had changed since the program began in the fall of 2015; the vast majority of this turnover occurred in three programs, which reported more than two teachers changing during the first 15 months of operation. Three communities did not see any lead teacher turnover. PEG programs are showing promising stability, although work remains to be done, particularly in this handful of programs that continue to experience high levels of turnover.

#### Supports for Families

The provision of comprehensive services and the engagement of families has been an aspect of the PEG design that programs have embraced; all but a few small providers in Boston have used PEG funds to hire one or more family engagement staff. These professionals organize family engagement events, conduct home visits, sometimes with teachers, provide case management and support a strong foundation of trust between families and the program. At the same time, PEG programs acknowledged in year one that these efforts were not coordinated across programs, that a familiarity with local and state resources was essential to effective case management and that the PEG programs did not have the capacity to fully replicate a Head Start model. In response to these challenges, steering committees or comprehensive service subcommittees have begun to coordinate the comprehensive services, sharing the work of obtaining services for families and, in some communities, and contracting with a key set of service providers. All communities have also identified behavioral health supports as a strong need for families and programs and have concentrated resources to contract such services community-wide. Nonetheless, continued efforts to coordinate and align these efforts will be necessary going forward.

### Role of Data and Evaluation

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and each PEG community have made a substantial financial commitment to the evaluation of these programs. Rich data on implementation, classroom quality and child outcomes was collected in year one of the program. Abt Associates, the contracted research firm, provided the data to programs as it was collected, allowing for data driven decisions to take place throughout the year. A review of the final report of the year one data provided an important point of reflection for all programs as they began planning for year two. Having concrete information about implementation and quality has been essential to support communities in checking their assumptions and to provide grounding for productive conversations about differences of perspective between partners. Changes in year two have resulted from lessons learned and support careful targeting of technical assistance provided by the state.

### Key Accomplishments

The PEG funded programs have provided important benefits to the children, families, educators and communities served. Not only was access expanded and the key drivers of quality implemented, particular components of the program were highlighted by parents, teachers and PEG administrators as having an important impact.

1. The PEG program has been very highly valued by parents. The high levels of program satisfaction (over 90 percent) and strong statements of support shared during parent focus groups have communicated the deep appreciation parents have felt for the opportunity to participate. Relationships with program staff have been strong; 89 percent of parents reported feeling connected or strongly connected to the PEG program and none felt strongly disconnected. Parents also appreciated the opportunity to learn how to help their child in school and reported seeing the growth in their child's skills over the courses of the year. Parents all want to do the best for their children, and the removal of the economic barrier to such an important opportunity was deeply appreciated by many.
2. The intensive investment that has been made across all PEG programs in supporting teachers has showed strong signs of being both well received by educators as well as building the professionalism and competence of the workforce. Over 90 percent of teachers reported feeling satisfied with their job and endorsed statements of self-efficacy (i.e. "I feel I am making a significant educational difference in the lives of my students."). During focus groups, teachers report great satisfaction with the extent to which they have been respected as professionals and the quality of the professional supports they have received. Taken together, these signs point to

a workforce that is satisfied with their jobs and confident in their ability yet open to ongoing professional growth. Each community has successfully leveraged professional development resources from the public schools, EEC grant funded Educational Provider Support (EPS) and local agency resources to develop a rich and coordinated system of professional development. Coaching is now provided by the public schools in every community, something that is not typically available in such a comprehensive way. Local discussions around the impact of coaching indicates that coaching provides educators with a unique opportunity to reflect on their practice, establish goals to improve classroom quality, and support to effectively implement curriculum. EEC's PEG-funded Workforce Specialist continues to work with communities to support shared professional development planning and improved alignment of these supports within communities. EEC has also recognized the central role that educational leaders and coaches play in ensuring that effective supports for teachers continue. Educational leaders have been given multiple opportunities to join in statewide professional learning communities and trainings, focused on topics such as inclusion supports, standardized observation tools and the integration of coaching and curriculum implementation. EEC's efforts to support leaders in PEG programs will continue and will inform the development of upcoming grants focused on the development of a statewide coaching infrastructure and overall workforce development.

3. A standardized inventory of collaboration factors administered in year one showed that communities were consistently strong in the commitment of individual members, the existence of informal relationships and “concrete, obtainable goals and objectives.” PEG communities have successfully built a network of stakeholders locally, coordinated services across multiple agencies, aligned community-based programming with the public school, and leveraged the expertise across the community to provide programming effectively and consistently. Through this work, relationships have been developed between individuals working in different systems and a shared mission to serve all children in the local community has organized and driven this work. These strengths have supported more collaboration at all levels, from program directors sharing best practices, to the management of each agency considering new cost sharing efforts. The overall high levels of collaboration and trust building in each community has created a strong group of advocates for systemic efforts in each community to provide quality prekindergarten universally and further build aligned supports for families and children from birth to grade 3. These local collaborations supported PEG communities' participation in a MA grant, the Commonwealth Preschool Partnerships Initiative, where they had the opportunity to plan for how they might expand the PEG model and offer preschool programming for children ages 2.9 to five years old.
4. As the state legislature debates on the extent to which the state continues to support universal prekindergarten, the PEG programs have been an important example of what is possible with strong community collaboration, public-private partnerships and adequate funding. Attention has been paid to the success of the program's first year, including multiple articles across the state highlighting the findings of the first year evaluation. The Governor, the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner were all quoted remarking on the promising potential of the PEG program. EEC has submitted a report to the legislature summarizing the lessons learned from the first year of the program. The Board of Early Education and Care is regularly updated on progress and an Advisory representing a true cross sector of the field, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) and Strategies for Children, a local advocacy group, is relied upon for guidance as well. As a result, the PEG program is being shaped by the input of leadership at all levels and is well positioned to inform the state's future efforts to develop universal prekindergarten.

#### Challenges and Lessons Learned

1. As in year one, despite strong outreach efforts, maintaining full enrollment has continued to be a challenge in three of the five communities in year two. This process has revealed the extensive needs assessment work that is necessary when trying to target an underserved population. For example, Lowell had an enrollment challenge in year one, but the provision of targeted transportation greatly improved accessibility and the program opened with full classrooms and a waiting list in September of year two. In Boston, competition with the public school prekindergarten classrooms have led to under-enrollment and high levels of child turnover as children transition to public prekindergarten classrooms in order to confirm a seat in their highly desired Kindergarten (K2) classrooms. Efforts are underway to identify the supply and demand for prekindergarten at the neighborhood level and coordinate services between the public schools and the community-based programs to reduce the competition for students. Other communities continue to consider the geography of supply demand and brainstorm new ways to adequately meet the local needs. EEC has also recognized that children with previously inconsistent preschool enrollment are important to serve and has changed enrollment requirements to allow communities more flexibility in targeting their efforts to align more closely with the demand for high quality prekindergarten in the community.
2. PEG programs consistently reported serving low numbers of children with special needs, when compared to the state average. The reasons for these numbers are discussed extensively in this report, but the fact remains very apparent that efforts to support inclusion across the state have not adequately addressed the role private preschool programs might play in meeting the needs of children with special needs. EEC is collaborating with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and providing statewide opportunities for PEG representative to join with public school special education staff and Head Start inclusion specialists to discuss how inclusion might be integrated more fully into the local early childhood systems. Each community has a task force working on this topic and EEC is committed to providing ongoing support to bring innovative ideas to fruition. As EEC reevaluates its current grant models, this work will support planning efforts to ensure funds that have been set aside to support quality continue to provide effective supports for inclusion.
3. Building community collaborations across local agencies can be difficult. The logistical challenges were daunting in the first year, as systems had to be put in place to pass funds from federal to state to municipal governments and then on to community based organizations, and to monitor fund use. However, these systems are now largely in place and functioning smoothly. At the same time, trust had to develop or, in some cases, be re-established among local partners. The long-standing fear among early educators that public schools are destined to put them out of the business of educating four year olds had to have a place to be aired. The resultant feelings of disappointment that public school staff were not always considered equal partners at the table also needed its place to be addressed. Budget decisions had to be made that reflected the inherent strengths of LEAS and ELPs, with a commitment to common priorities despite differing initial approaches to teaching and learning. These relationships are developing well, but have taken time to build, and are still tenuous in some cases. EEC continues to pay attention to the local relationships and provides support, guidance, and, on occasion, mediation, as necessary to continue the building of trust, shared goal setting and effective collaboration.

## Conclusion

As this report will detail, the second year of PEG implementation has built on the successes of year one, achieving the majority of the goals of the program in a short period of time. Areas of continued challenge have been identified and resources are being deployed to address issues that have arisen. The ongoing longitudinal evaluation of the program is playing a critical role in supporting EEC and subgrantees in systematically documenting the current state of program implementation and providing data that has informed programmatic adjustments. The summary of year one findings has also been an important communication tool for EEC, and the evaluation work, as well as the first hand experiences of PEG stakeholders and agency staff, will continue to inform EEC and the state in its ongoing efforts to better support the early education workforce and move towards high quality universal

prekindergarten.

Note: throughout this report, quotes from focus group participants have been included in *italics*. This data was gathered by Abt Associates as part of their evaluation efforts.



**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: MA

PR/Award #: S419B150023

**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.

*“It's easy to teach my child with the programs help and because of this I can carry over skills from school to home. It also helped with time not worrying about daycare as a fulltime mom. I can also work more hours.” PEG Parent*

PEG funding has allowed EEC to work with five communities, Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield, to build new partnerships and create new state funded prekindergarten openings in these communities. In year two of this grant, as of December 1st, EEC increased the number of eligible children enrolled in state supported prekindergarten to 752 (we reported serving 702 children last year at this time). The state is very close to our target enrollment of 755 and expects that enrollment will continue to increase over the course of the school year, due to continued outreach efforts by the subgrantees. Additionally, all programs have reported some turnover of students over the course of the year; the total number of children served so far in year two is 788.

In each PEG community, the school department (LEA) and community-based early learning providers (ELPs) began planning and conducting enrollment and outreach in the spring of 2016, adjusting their approach to reflect the successes and challenges experienced in year one. Communities decided they needed to begin outreach earlier, include prekindergarten outreach in kindergarten enrollment family engagement events and encourage enrolled families to spread the word about the high quality program their children were attending. In four of the five communities, Boston being the exception, the PEG-funded openings have been slated solely for children who have never received any formal early education, including family childcare, prior to enrolling in the PEG-funded classrooms. This decision followed from an analyses that identified large numbers of underserved children entering kindergarten in these communities. This has created some unexpected challenges in communities, the most salient one being the intensity of outreach efforts needed to recruit enough children to fill all the seats. All four of these communities continued to engage in extensive local outreach efforts. Local efforts included:

- Extensive door-to-door outreach - although time consuming, programs have consistently reported that person to person contacts are the most effective in recruiting families.
- The LEAs and ELPs collaborated in sending PEG staff to various community events to meet families face to face.

- Identification of local community organizations that were willing to collaborate in getting the message out to families.
- Surveying community leaders to develop a better understanding of where and how to locate particular groups of families that may have a history of disengagement from public education systems prior to kindergarten, such as particular immigrant communities. EEC's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) staff and local grantees provided, support to communities during the outreach process by consulting with the LEA and ELP leadership around outreach opportunities in the communities and using EEC activities, such as facilitated parent-child play groups, to get the word out to families about the program.
- Programs in Lowell determined that because they had one central site in the city, there were children who could not reach the program due to limited access to transportation. Targeted transportation was put in place to expand access to the program. One of the ELPs integrated the PEG children into transportation services they provided to their other programs, making the delivery cost effective. This agency also had a well-developed needs assessment process that was adopted by the PEG programs. This effort has been so successful that the program in Lowell opened with all seats full in the fall of 2016 and has maintained enrollment over 98 percent despite high levels of turnover.

Despite these efforts, seats remained unfilled in Holyoke and Springfield in the fall of 2016. In both these cities, needs assessments conducted in the spring of 2016 using state funds for sustainability and expansion planning, were consulted, to identify potential barriers for underserved families. The physical location of programs in both communities is being discussed as a potential issue, and Lowell's success in providing targeted transportation is being reviewed. In Springfield, the needs assessment identified a potentially underserved neighborhood, which could be provided with a shuttle, however, parent interest in accessing such services is currently unclear and under investigation. In Holyoke, one school has been identified as difficult for families to access, so transportation is being considered for that site. There are agencies in each community with the capacity to provide cost-effective transportation, as was done in Lowell, but both agencies want to be sure there are enough interested families before committing the resources. The larger strategic question that has been raised is whether families would prefer to send their children to a program close to home, or are willing to use transportation to access free prekindergarten. The needs assessment work being conducted to address enrollment issues in year two will also inform planning for year three, when programs will have the ability to relocate classrooms, if necessary.

Holyoke and Springfield have identified many children with inconsistent histories of early education that do not currently have access to a program and would be eligible for PEG if not for their prior preschool experience. Many of these children are homeless or involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), vulnerable populations that the state is committed to prioritizing. In response, EEC has changed PEG eligibility requirements to allow programs to fill 20 percent of their slots with children who have had some prior preschool experience but are not currently in a program and who are eligible for PEG in all other ways. In this way, the state continues to prioritize children who have not received formal early education services but allows programs flexibility to include other high needs groups. This change was made in November 2016 and will remain in place in year three and four. Increases in enrollment in Springfield and Holyoke followed. Programs continue to strive towards full enrollment and EEC will work closely to support and encourage their efforts.

At the same time, these programs are effectively reaching a very high need and often transient population. The mean reported income was just over \$19,000 a year and 90 percent of families had incomes below \$40,000. As a result, EEC recognizes that some instability in enrollment may be the norm in these programs. Enrollment data submitted to EEC in January, verified these patterns; across the state seven percent of the children enrolled have left the program during the first three months, the vast majority as a result of a move. This transience was particularly pronounced in Springfield and Lowell with eight and nine percent, respectively, of enrolled children having left. Lawrence, Lowell and Holyoke reported three percent or fewer children leaving.

In Boston, the extensive availability of early education programs for four year-olds led to the decision to integrate the grant funding with other funding sources, in an effort to expand the quality over the quantity of publicly funded openings available to children in the current programs. This decision allowed programs in Boston more flexibility to braid funding sources and, in some programs, serve children in mixed-income and mixed-age classrooms. Rather than building a program from scratch, as in the other four communities, with new classrooms and new program sites, Boston has focused on working with already existing classrooms and programs. Enrollment in both year one and year two has been a challenge across programs in Boston, although different programs have struggled in year one and year two. In year two, Boston has served 262 children while programs have committed to 280 PEG-funded slots. Recently, Boston Mayor Walsh and Boston Public Schools (BPS) have made a commitment to provide universal prekindergarten to four year olds in Boston, and, although committed to using a mixed delivery system for this effort, BPS has increased the number of slots available for four year olds in BPS schools. Programs suspect that the increased availability of city funded seats may be partially responsible for reductions in enrollment seen this year. These programs have experienced high levels of turnover in the fall, as children who receive a seat in a BPS school of choice leave the PEG program. In year one, 14 percent of children enrolled had left as of December 1, while in year two the number has been halved but remains high at seven percent, with most leaving for BPS. Because, BPS has a highly competitive lottery system in place to manage school choice, families feel that if they are offered a seat at a school of choice, they must take it or lose the opportunity to attend that school. The project manager at BPS has been supporting programs in a marketing effort and in coordinating enrollment efforts with BPS waitlist information, both to identify children interested in prekindergarten programs who are unlikely to receive a seat at a BPS run classroom and alert programs to children already enrolled are likely to receive a seat in the near future, and potentially leave the PEG program. Continued coordination between BPS and ELPs will be necessary to address the ongoing challenges in Boston. As BPS works with the mayor's office to develop a plan to provide universal prekindergarten in Boston through a mixed delivery system, PEG programs are in conversation with BPS to consider how these classrooms might be used to sustain PEG investments and pilot efforts to build greater coordination, such as defining the program's role as feeder schools into the BPS system.

Central to the success of each community in increasing enrollment and addressing enrollment challenges has been the collaboration between the public schools and EEC-licensed programs in planning and problem solving together. Collaborative decision making was a central expectation of EEC for the five communities that were granted PEG funds. Each agency brings experience serving a group of families in the community, while the public school comes with a sense of obligation to all children in the municipality. Collectively, the management teams in each community, which are comprised of members from all partnering organizations, have been able to think creatively, pool resources and consider the needs of children and families systemically, informed by but not limited by each program's commitment to and experience with particular populations and regions in the city. EEC staff continue to be active participants in these meetings, bringing an understanding of state grants and policies, as well as the ability to help communities negotiate differences, encourage creative thinking and provide guidance on state regulations and policies. Enrollment challenges have served to force communities to reexamine their initial assumptions about the needs of families, and to develop more

responsive efforts to serve the community as a whole.

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.*

EEC recognizes that the inclusion of children with disabilities is a priority and will require additional infrastructure development at the state and local level to ensure that LEA and ELP partners identify the methods for inclusion that best meet the needs of children and families. Specific efforts to support full inclusion of Eligible Children with Disabilities in the High-Quality Preschool Program (HQPP) are underway. Due to challenges in year one and year two of PEG in meeting the target for the number of children with identified disabilities (defined as a child with an Individual Education Plan or IEP with the local public school; Massachusetts has a slightly higher percentage than the national average at 6.9%), we are still working toward meeting the requirement (currently 2.7% have been identified). Potential barriers being addressed in year two include the eligibility criteria of no prior preschool, the typical location for special education services in Massachusetts (most often provided in public school classrooms), and building the capacity of local preschool administrators and educators to support inclusion. Informed by lessons learned from year one and planning for implementation in year two, EEC continues to address this priority through a multi-pronged approach.

#### Eligibility Policy for Children with Disabilities

As described in the previous narrative section, EEC continues to prioritize the enrollment of children with little to no prior preschool experience in its PEG programs. The decision to prioritize children with no prior preschool experience, in part, contributed to the lower number of children with identified disabilities due to the fact that many children with identified special needs have been potentially supported through an inclusion classroom when they were three, making them ineligible for PEG during their prekindergarten year. Grantee communities report strong collaboration and coordination between early intervention service providers and the public school, allowing them to successfully meet the needs of many children well before their prekindergarten year. Due to challenges in meeting the target for the number of children with identified disabilities enrolled in year one of PEG, eligibility criteria for children in this population is less rigid in year two, allowing for children with identified special needs to enter the PEG program regardless of their prior preschool experience. In some cases, this has resulted in grantee communities beginning to conduct specific outreach to children who are enrolled in a half-day special education program in the local public school to arrange for participation in a PEG classroom so they have access to a full-day program. As morning and afternoon classes are offered by the public schools, one available PEG opening can be used by two public school children to supplement their day; PEG funding covers the costs of the additional half day. For children who are dually enrolled in a public school classrooms and PEG classroom, grantee communities are thoughtfully planning around the appropriateness of the placement, and the role of supplemental comprehensive services in meeting the needs of the child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the PEG classroom. LEAs and ELPs continue to work together to identify children on IEPs who receive their services at a public school setting who may need extended hours and days of services beyond the public school calendar and who can be served in PEG classrooms.

## Screening and Evaluation

At the beginning of the PEG program year, much time is spent getting to know the children as they transition into a formal preschool program for the first time, while working closely with families through home visits and family engagement activities at the program level. In the first months of PEG programming, programs are conducting developmental screening, identifying individual needs of children, while making determinations about the need to refer them for a formal special education evaluation by the local school district. In Lawrence, ELPs are also conducting English Language screenings during the first few months of the program year, therefore identifying children who may need additional language support as they enter kindergarten. As children are being screened in the first few months of the program year, educators, program administrators and public school staff, including directors of special education, along with other PEG funded comprehensive service providers/teams (e.g., speech pathologists, occupational therapists, mental health consultants, and physical therapists) are working collaboratively to determine the appropriate next steps for the child. The time it takes to screen children, refer a child for an evaluation by the public schools, and potentially be identified with a special need can be months from the beginning of the program year. Not surprising, therefore, is the fact that Massachusetts has not yet met the PEG-required target of 6.9 percent children with identified disabilities as of December 1 as the processes of observation, screening and, if needed, special education evaluations take time. As of December 1, 2.7% of children (20 of 752 children) enrolled in PEG have identified disabilities.

## Targeted Family Engagement and Comprehensive Services

As outreach and enrollment efforts continue, LEAs and ELPs are expected to work with IEP teams, including families, to talk about the benefits of enrolling in PEG classrooms when determining the least restrictive environment for the child. Conversations continue about how to serve children receiving IEP services in PEG classrooms at the ELP sites; however, in many cases talking with families about the benefits of the PEG classrooms has been a critical component of the outreach conducted by all five communities.

Comprehensive services in PEG classrooms are very beneficial for all children, including those with identified disabilities. Many communities plan for comprehensive services based on the needs in their community, and ensure that children and families, including children with disabilities, have access to the many important supports that can strengthen a child's development and learning, including health, mental health, speech therapy, occupational therapy (OT), and physical therapy (PT). These services are increasingly being offered as full enrollment is attained and the needs of children are being identified. Comprehensive services such as OT, PT and speech have the potential to proactively respond to children who may be behind developmentally and may serve to avoid referral to special education. Whether a child currently has an IEP, has been referred to special education for an evaluation, or is being observed to determine whether a referral is necessary, these comprehensive services are critical to better understand where a child is in his/her development and to ensure that time to support development and learning is not lost during the referral and eligibility determination processes.

In year two, all PEG communities have planned for more intensive and targeted comprehensive services, and are more consistently providing access to services such as mental health consultation, occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy. The communities' extensive outreach to hard-to-reach families has been successful in identifying children who are in need of supports, including children who are experiencing homelessness, trauma and other toxic stressors. Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of these comprehensive services will support the children to make progress and ultimately, result in fewer referrals to special education. Mental health services and services that support a child's social and emotional well-being are a high priority for the PEG classrooms. For example, Springfield, Lowell, and one ELP in Lawrence hired a mental and behavioral

health specialist in order to be able to provide mental health services onsite; other communities are planning and/or referring children and families to community-based organizations to meet their needs.

#### Feedback from local stakeholders to inform immediate priorities to support inclusion

Over the course of year one, PEG communities reported common challenges around processes that support inclusion. These challenges will be described in this section, in addition to a discussion of plans to address them. A more comprehensive description of the state and local strategies to overcome these barriers will be addressed in the following sections.

#### Coordination Between LEAs and ELPs

As inclusion continues to be a priority focus in year two, planning for strategies to support inclusion have prompted local PEG administrators at the LEA and ELP level to engage educators and other PEG staff to gain a better understanding of where there might be opportunities to enhance coordination between LEAs and ELPs. Additionally, these conversations have also addressed the capacity and needs of PEG educators and other PEG staff that play a role in supporting inclusive practices and policies.

There has been much progress toward the goal of enhancing coordination between LEAs and ELPs. In Lowell and Holyoke, PEG communities reported the complex referral and IEP process is not clear to some staff. In response, ELPs have invited LEA special education staff to provide training and orientations around the referral process, and continue to plan for the provision of administrative support in this process. In Lawrence, the LEA is implementing a standardized form that will outline established process guidelines for referrals. One ELP in Lawrence is funding an inclusion specialist position to coordinate all special education related services, from the screening and referral process to providing support to families. Lowell plans to develop guidance to providers to support consistent messaging around the importance of inclusion. Holyoke has student support team meetings at each school in the district to better coordinate special education services for all children, and invites local PEG ELP partners to participate. Generally, LEAs are working with their ELP partners to participate in the IEP process and provide some consultation to educators around accommodations to meet the needs of individual children.

#### Educator Preparedness

PEG communities report variation in the capacity of educators to support children with diverse learning needs, including those with IEPs. The complex nature of supporting all children, especially those with IEPs, is often a challenge, especially considering curriculum/instruction, supporting dual language acquisition, and social-emotional support for children. Adapting and modifying curriculum and implementing effective instructional strategies to support all children, while providing appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities, requires that educators and instructional leaders have a strong foundational knowledge in child development, curriculum and instruction, and can successfully implement their knowledge through effective inclusive practices. Across the state, grantees report the need to design and offer professional learning opportunities for PEG educators and administrators to build their competencies around supporting inclusive practices. In response to this, PEG communities are planning for joint professional development and thinking about the role of coaching to support these efforts. EEC is intentionally providing local flexibility to address this need in a way that meets the needs in the local context, while also encouraging collaboration with the public schools and leveraging existing resources. EEC is engaging in planning for statewide professional development to support inclusive practices that will be informed by PEG grantees and feedback from other EEC grantees through various workforce initiatives.

#### Examination of Service Delivery Models and Planning for Implementation

PEG communities continue to work toward creating more inclusive PEG classrooms and are working at

the local level to identify ways in which PEG classrooms are included in the options of least restrictive settings for children with IEPs as placement for next year's IEP services are determined. In PEG communities, special education services are typically provided in an inclusive, public school setting. For PEG funded children who have IEPs, they are typically dually enrolled in an inclusive preschool classroom at the public school for part of the day and in the PEG classroom for the remaining part of the day/week. For example, in Lowell and Lawrence, children attend an inclusion public prekindergarten classroom in the morning and are then transported to the PEG program for the remainder of the day. The role of comprehensive services is particularly important for these children, as these services often provide additional support throughout the entire day.

Enhanced coordination between LEAs and ELPs is proving to create movement toward the goal of improved inclusive preschool opportunities in PEG classrooms. Springfield has PEG classrooms co-located with public school classrooms with onsite speech, OT and PT service providers, and offer PEG children with these IEP related services in the PEG classroom. Given that the public school special education staff work with the public preschool classrooms, this model of co-locating classroom has provided an opportunity to optimize expenses related to serving children with disabilities as the staff can work together across public and community-based programs to directly deliver early childhood special education services, provide consultation services with ELP staff and/or to work together to proactively address the healthy growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

Looking forward to year three of PEG, Springfield is considering how they might place a child who has an IEP directly into the PEG program where they will provide all IEP services, including academic supports. They have highlighted the importance of building relationships with special education department staff so they know that PEG classrooms can be considered an appropriate, least restrictive environment. Building on the critical alignment between early intervention, preschool providers and public school programs, Springfield is beginning to capitalize on this strong coordination by working more intentionally to place children with IEPs in PEG classrooms and providing all IEP services in the PEG classroom instead of a public school classroom. This pilot is in the early stages of development and will require additional thinking around how to logistically plan for a public school staff providing services in the PEG classrooms. EEC looks forward to continuing to support Springfield and will gather lessons learned for this model so it can be considered in other communities.

#### Building State and Local Capacity to Support Effective Models of Inclusion and Professional Development

At the state level, the 619 coordinator, Head Start State Collaboration Office, PEG staff, staff from EEC's Workforce and Family and Community Supports Unit and staff from Head Start's regional training and technical assistance network are working together to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. PEG grantee communities (including LEA PEG coordinators, ELPs, Head Start disability coordinators and public school early childhood special education staff), as well as other communities with Head Start grantees, are participating in a professional development and networking opportunity called *Building Inclusive Communities in Early Childhood*. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan with PEG communities came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed in communities. Through this initiative, PEG communities are provided a platform to network, plan joint professional development, and discuss models for service delivery along with other communities across the Commonwealth working towards the same goal of strengthening inclusive practices.

Building on a statewide meeting of PEG grantees in April 2016 to discuss inclusion, members of the state team facilitated conversations at the local level in three PEG communities in the fall of 2016. The purpose of these meetings was to identify strengths, challenges and potential solutions for models of

inclusion and professional development. Local meetings included PEG LEA and ELP partners, special education directors, Head Start disability coordinators, and other relevant community partners. The initial meeting for the *Building Inclusive Communities* series was offered in October 2016, where communities were provided information from the joint policy statement around inclusion from The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the US Department of Education (DOE), as well as resources from the *Preschool Inclusion Toolbox* resource. Action plans were developed and the Workforce Development Specialist conducted follow up and continues to provide technical assistance related to their plans. A webinar opportunity to discuss statewide progress occurred in January 2017, and another in-person meeting is scheduled for March 2017 to continue these efforts.

Massachusetts PEG staff have been invited to discuss this work both at a session at the 2016 PDG Grantee meeting in Arlington, Virginia, as well as a recent webinar on recruitment and enrollment of children with disabilities for PDG grantees through the technical assistance network.

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

Central to the design of the PEG program was attention to capacity building at the local level. The intent of the PEG expectations has been to leverage local experience and organizational capacity to build on and integrate current systems, public and private, moving towards a more coordinated prekindergarten system at the community level. The following design factors have been critical to PEG success in expanding access to high quality programs:

- The grant funding was distributed to collaborations rather than individual providers, allowing each community to create a new system that built on the strengths of existing programs. Head Start grantees are represented in each community and bring their experience providing high quality services to family and children. Programs licensed by EEC and who have a long history of serving children receiving EEC subsidies have also played a central role. These programs are familiar with EEC requirements, have experience meeting the needs of low income families and providing early education services in each of these communities. Finally, the public school district serves as the LEA in each community and brings an understanding of the elementary and secondary educational system that children receiving PEG-funded programming will enter. The public schools are well situated to support community-wide alignment and alignment between the PEG model and public school programs.
- As the PEG-funded programs have been developed, EEC has relied on existing policies, while prioritizing a family-friendly approach that focuses on ensuring children's needs are met. At the foundation of the PEG model are the private, licensed programs providing services. EEC licensing regulations are some of the most stringent in the nation and ensure that children are in safe and developmentally appropriate environments. PEG programs are all required to participate in the Commonwealth's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), to ensure continuing quality improvement. Attendance is also being tracked, as it is in the subsidy system. However, in PEG programs the expectation is that programs will work with the families in ways that support positive child and family outcomes. For example, if children demonstrate chronic absenteeism, the program is expected to identify the barriers for families and support change, rather than expel families for poor attendance, as required by the subsidy system. In year two, PEG programs have built strong messages about the importance of attendance into recruitment materials, parent handbooks and ongoing parent communications. Programs report fewer chronic attendance issues and better overall enrollment. In year one, the average attendance rate was 86 percent while in year two it is 89 percent.
- Efforts have been made to consider the alignment of EEC policies through the implementation process, both by ensuring that PEG requirements were aligned with current policies and identifying challenges at the program level in implementing policies. For example, PEG requirements are well aligned with the Commonwealth's licensing requirements; class size and child-teacher ratio requirements are already required by licensing, for example. EEC staff are also working closely with PEG programs to integrate the various requirements these programs face. EEC's Workforce Specialist is working with programs to identify the professional development requirements of the QRIS system, discuss each communities' vision for professional development and determine a coherent plan to meet all these needs with the time available. As the communities have collaborated more extensively on creating aligned professional development plans, EEC has noticed that their professional development expectations have in some cases exceeded those incorporated in the QRIS

system.

- The monitoring process developed for PEG programs has also played an important role in ensuring that access is available to high quality programs in the five PEG communities and communities are working flexibly to build a strong program. Monitoring protocols have been developed to assess both programmatic and fiscal compliance and technical assistance was provided by EEC to the LEAs in the fall of year one. EEC now monitors the LEAs, who monitor the ELPs and processes are well established.
- Meetings of regional monitoring teams, including all EEC staff with contacts with these programs, have also begun and will meet twice a year to discuss PEG programs. Issues are shared with the PEG director as they arise. This group includes EEC staff at the local level including licensors, QRIS quality specialists, and the Regional Directors. Again, this model builds upon EEC's infrastructure while focusing it in a new way.

The management of the PEG program has also focused on ensuring that existing resources are leveraged and necessary capacity building is available. EEC PEG-funded staff regularly attend local planning and implementation committee meetings. Through such frequent attendance, EEC staff have built a deep understanding of each community, while being available to respond quickly to questions about the design of the program as they have arisen. In some cases, issues can be quickly addressed at the meetings, while others require EEC staff to bring questions back for consideration. In these instances, due to the placement of the PEG director as a direct report to the Deputy Commissioner of Program Administration, EEC is able to provide a quick responses to questions as they arise, ensuring that communities' planning and implementation are not impeded.

To support ongoing attention to quality at the local level, EEC provides multiple opportunities for PEG grantees to share information and receive technical assistance on different components of the grant. State-wide meetings took place three times in 2016 and focused on a variety of topics including the provision of comprehensive services, inclusion supports, and interpreting the PEG evaluation data. Opportunities for cross-state planning and community level planning are included in all meetings.

The evaluation of the PEG programs being conducted in collaboration with Abt Associates and the University of Massachusetts Boston has also provided important feedback to support quality improvement efforts. During data collection, Abt provided data on classroom quality, program implementation, teacher and parent experiences and child assessment results to programs, as it was collected. This feedback loop allowed programs to make mid course adjustments and respond quickly to issues being raised by the data collected. The programs also provided important feedback to EEC and Abt about the usefulness of different measures for informing program decisions, feedback which has shaped the evaluation design in year two. A full report on the year one findings was provided to EEC in the fall of 2016, a presentation of these findings was made to the EEC Board and they have been reported to the state legislature. Overall, Abt's report concluded that collaborations between public school districts and EEC-licensed private early education providers can be effective at designing and implementing high-quality prekindergarten programs in a relatively short period of time. Classroom observations revealed moderate to high levels of quality, on average, across different dimensions of quality. The children's scores on assessments of math, letter-word recognition, self-regulation and social skills conducted at the end of the program year, fell within an expected range of scores for children of this age.

At the same time, some quality components remained only partially implemented or at levels lower than desired, suggesting areas of focus for the second year of implementation. Measures of particular interactions between teachers and children known to support language, literacy and conceptual understandings identified very few classrooms demonstrating very high quality interactions and some

demonstrating low quality. The children enrolled demonstrated vocabulary skills at the end of the program year that were lower than expected based on a national sample, although the biggest differences were observed among dual language learners. Implementation of some elements of the design, particular family engagement supports, comprehensive services and inclusion, showed great variability across programs. In year two, EEC's capacity building efforts will be responsive to these results and target alignment of professional development supports, continued attention to improving classroom quality particularly around children's language development, improved collaboration for inclusion, and more consistent provision of comprehensive services.

Finally, in support of preschool expansion efforts, the state legislature has made grants available in year one and two of the PEG program for communities to plan for continued expansion of publicly funded preschool. These grants were available to all communities in the Commonwealth, including the PEG subgrantees, and supported needs assessment work, strategic planning and the identification of local resources. Grantees were required to build collaborations between public schools and local EEC-licensed programs and address all of the high quality elements required by PEG in their plans. Strategic plans from the first year of planning grants were submitted to EEC in June and a report detailing the common themes across communities was submitted to the legislature by EEC. Not only have these planning grants laid the groundwork for expansion beyond the PEG subgrantees if funds are available, they also supported continued strategic planning and needs assessment in the PEG communities.

**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.

A full 100 percent of PEG funding at EEC is dedicated to increasing the quantity of state-funded preschool through private, EEC-licensed providers, due to the fact that there is currently no state-funded prekindergarten in EEC's budget. Funds for public preschool administered by ESE are described below. All state funds disbursed by EEC are focused on improving the quality of the licensed programs already in the system, i.e. Universal prekindergarten (UPK), Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (IPLE) grants, QRIS improvement grants, Educator Provider Support (EPS) grants, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grants, Head Start Supplemental and Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) grants all increase the availability of resources to support quality in EEC licensed programs. The only public funding that is targeted at financing the full costs of providing early education services in private providers in Massachusetts comes from federal funds through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) provides Chapter 70 funding to public school districts to ensure parity in education spending across districts. The numbers of four year olds served in public school prekindergarten programming is accounted for in the formula that allocates funding across districts, primarily directed at services to children with identified special needs in inclusive classrooms. The PEG funds support private, EEC-licensed providers in expanding access to programs outside of those run directly by public schools. The PEG design then includes public school districts as key players in local design supporting better integration of these two systems. As a result, there is a great deal of interest in learning from the implementation of the PEG model about how best to develop a more integrated and more robustly funded system through the combination of local, state and federally funded resources.

Through PEG funding, the number of eligible children enrolled in state supported prekindergarten increased to 752 (we reported serving 702 children last year at this time). An additional 25 percent of eligible children in the five communities served by PEG have had access to prekindergarten as a result

of the grant. Of these children, 66 percent had never before attended any formal early education program, suggesting that the extensive outreach conducted has engaged children who would have otherwise gone to kindergarten without any formal early education. The state is very close to our target enrollment of 755 and expects that enrollment will continue to increase over the course of the school year, due to continued outreach efforts by the subgrantees.

Because of the expectation that PEG communities will integrate systems and programs across public schools and community-based providers, communities are thinking carefully about how resources and funding streams could be best knit together into a coherent and effective system for providing free public prekindergarten to all eligible children in PEG communities. In particular, as we reach the halfway point in the PEG funding, local sustainability conversations are beginning in earnest. Four of the five communities took advantage of the state's preschool planning funds to support these efforts, while Boston has been engaged in a planning process with the Mayor's office. As the PEG communities consider how they might blend funding streams, the following issues are being considered:

- Exploring ways to use Chapter 70 funding can be used to support prekindergarten programs in a public-private delivery system.
- Using Head Start funding to provide Head Start's comprehensive services to all PEG children who would be eligible but are not being served in a Head Start program.
- Developing more centralized enrollment procedures that support eligible families in identifying the best program for their family and child from the full set of possibilities available in the community. Two communities currently have centralized the enrollment processes at the public school kindergarten registration offices and provide referrals to all free, publically funded programs in the community, including support in understanding eligibility requirements. At the same time, public schools do not typically have relationships with the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies that manage subsidy enrollment, so full information is not yet available. In three other communities, there is recognition that programs have strong connections to the community, and therefore the first point of contact is the program, as families are often familiar with the agencies and seek out information there. In these communities, careful attention has been paid to information sharing about all PEG programs.
- A subtext throughout all these discussions is a question of who "owns" the responsibility for children served through a collaboration like PEG. The programs directly serving the children are licensed by EEC. Ultimately, each program is therefore legally responsible for the services they provide and EEC is the authority deeming them competent to provide such services. Yet there are many opportunities for the collaborative provision of services which raise questions about how responsibility is delegated when multiple organizations are together serving one child. EEC has worked closely with programs to identify how staff working directly with children might be shared across multiple programs. Additionally, the needs assessments conducted in all communities and the efforts to think strategically about enrollment have built a stronger sense of community responsibility in these collaborations.

The state legislature and public discourse in Massachusetts have also remained focused on how access to high quality prekindergarten might be expanded. The legislature continued funding of the preschool planning grants in year two of PEG, which will be focused on planning for sustainability of preschool programming. A recent press release announcing the report to the legislature about the year one evaluation findings has received some good coverage in news outlets across the state. The PEG programs continue to serve the important role of demonstrating how high quality preschool can be provided through public-private partnerships, and the successes and lessons learned from year one are receiving broad attention.

**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.

### Overview

MA Curriculum Frameworks provide our state's standards that guide not only the curriculum and instruction provided for children at any grade, but also provide a framework, from preschool through grade 12, of the skills and competencies that will support their ability to be successful in school. These standards also provide our state with a guide for screening and assessment practices.

In determining the tools to use in identifying the school readiness of children served by PEG funded programs, EEC has taken a two pronged approach. We have drawn on the experience with the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) initiative and are also leveraging the data that we are receiving from the evaluation of the PEG programs.

### GOLD by Teaching Strategies©

Massachusetts KEA utilized the GOLD tool, published by Teaching Strategies (TS GOLD). With the

exception of a few districts that used the Work Sampling System, TS GOLD has been used in kindergarten in districts that received the state's Quality Full-Day Kindergarten grant. PEG programs were aligned with this effort and required to use the same tool. Unfortunately, the legislature's elimination of the Full-Day Kindergarten grant from the FY17 budget has led to a reduced use of TS GOLD in kindergarten classrooms. The checkpoints reported by programs at the end of the PEG program now provide the only opportunity to use this tool to assess kindergarten readiness. This checkpoint information is available to the state and could be analyzed to understand the Kindergarten readiness of PEG children.

As the state continues to consider the use of the TS GOLD tool, a commitment to supporting formative assessment remains. ESE is developing a statement about the key features of formative assessment with recommendations for its use. One challenge reported with the MKEA was that the acronym led to an erroneous expectation that the initiative was focused on identifying a student's competencies at entry to kindergarten only, instead of reflecting a formative assessment framework that was designed to measure a child's progress and inform instruction over time. The provision of professional development on formative assessment as well as reframing and evolving the initiative in this space (e.g., *Formative Assessment of Young Children: Improving Teaching and Learning in the Early Grades through Observation*) to more accurately reflect the goals that we are proposing through the state's joint position statement on assessment in the early grades (in progress) would help to strengthen assessment practices.

In PEG programs, extensive professional development in the use of formative assessment is required as part of QRIS participation and is ongoing in all communities. Statewide meetings of grantees have included technical assistance on using data, including assessment data, to improve program quality. The spring/summer TS GOLD checkpoint data provides a broad overview of children's development at the end of the prekindergarten year across all domains of development. At the same, consultation with the developers of the tool raised questions about its utility in providing a final determination on children's kindergarten readiness. Although benchmarks against age expectations could be identified for each of the domains measured, the tool was not developed to provide an overall assessment of kindergarten readiness using data from all domains. Additionally, EEC wants to be sure that programs remain committed to using this tool for formative assessment and focus attention on how the information gathered over time can inform instruction. The lesson learned from MKEA about the ease with which the focus on formative assessment can be lost have been taken to heart. EEC does not require teachers establish reliability in using the tool, leading to concerns about the consistency of the data quality. Finally, EEC has access to scores in each TS GOLD domain, but does not have the ability to link individual level data to the database of PEG children, limiting our ability to disaggregate data by child characteristics. As result, TS GOLD remains an important tool for the purposes of ensuring teachers are attending to the kindergarten readiness of the children they teach, but may not be the most effective tool for the purposes of state reporting.

#### PEG Evaluation Assessment Tools

The Abt evaluation provides a different type of data that could be used to assess kindergarten readiness, the results of standardized assessments administered by trained assessors with a representative sample of children for the purpose of identifying children's skills at a particular point in time. These results are far more likely to be reliable and valid indicators of children's kindergarten readiness, although challenges remain in integrating the results across measures and determining clear cut points. EEC also owns the data that Abt gathers and can therefore link the evaluation assessment data to child specific information in state data systems, using the State Assigned Student Identification (SASID) assigned to each child when they enter the PEG program. This SASID also will facilitate efforts to gather data on the child's progress in elementary school. As the data is held at the child level and can be linked to other data sources, data can be disaggregated by program or other child characteristics as necessary. However, this data is only drawn from the sample of children attending PEG programs and is a

temporary data source. While the best tool currently available for state reporting on school readiness of children generally in the PEG programs, it will be important for EEC to consider the implications for sustainability of such reporting when the PEG program is finished.

### Data and Usage

EEC will consider the lessons learned from the data derived from the assessment tools used as part of the evaluation, and the process of using an external evaluator to collect data on a sample of children, as a way to identify the overall performance of children in a state funded program.

For the purposes of reporting on school readiness in year two of the PEG program, EEC has decided to use the results of one of the assessments used by Abt Associates, the Woodcock-Johnson, which included the scale evaluating mathematical understandings (applied problems) and letter identification (letter-word). This tool has the advantage of focusing on two key academic domains that are known to correlate with later school success and was also administered in Spanish (the Woodcock-Muñoz) for children whose home language was Spanish and who were not proficient in English. The sample of children assessed was identified by randomly selecting children (six or more) in each PEG classroom to test and therefore, provides a reasonable representation of the PEG program as a whole. Because this tool is normed, the standardized scores can be used to identify a range of performance that is within the range expected of children of the same age, thereby identify the number of children whose skills lag far enough behind their age mates to put them at risk. Children had to have a score of 85 or higher on both scales to be considered ready for kindergarten (reflecting the achievement of 84 percent of children in the normed sample); 82 percent of children in PEG evaluated fell in this range, suggesting the skills of PEG children are roughly comparable to the normed sample. Given the large percentages of English language learners, recent immigrants and very low income children serve by PEG programs, groups who often lag behind their peers, these results are promising.

PEG teachers will continue to use TS GOLD and attend to the real time opportunity it provides them to understand the progress of children they teach towards kindergarten readiness. The TS GOLD tool includes coverage of the five essential domains; in this particular tool, the indicators of development and learning are grouped into six categories and include: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy and mathematics. The information about children's development reported in bi-annual "checkpoints" is organized by the tool into "bands" that identify the typical ages at which particular skills and abilities emerge. These "bands" make it easy for programs to identify at a glance which children are in normative ranges and for whom and for what domains additional support may be required. When we review the data available from TS GOLD on PEG children to include an assessment of social-emotional skills in our understanding of kindergarten readiness, we find the readiness rates in this domain to be similar to those reported above on math and literacy skills, with 85-90 percent of the children rated within or exceeding the widely held expectations for their age group. As we consider our efforts to understand kindergarten readiness in year two of PEG, we will request a report from each program on the readiness of the PEG children as part of our summer audit process. We will then be able to use this information to understand readiness patterns, as determined by programs, across the state. The report will also be available for programs to share with elementary schools and kindergarten teachers. EEC will consider using these reports as a basis for further conversations about the strengths and challenges they see facing the children they serve, and how they are responding to these issues. Conversations about how the elementary schools feel these children compare to others entering kindergarten and the areas of strengths and challenges they note could also follow.

### Plans for Year 3 Reporting

Given the expectation that disaggregated data will be reported in year three, EEC will retain the same processes for the report of school readiness, but will continue to provide updates on the state's long

Item plans for formative assessment, screening and evaluation of school readiness.

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**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.**

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## 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.*

In Massachusetts, the PEG model is being looked to as an example of how support for high quality prekindergarten implementation can be built into an aligned public-private system of early education. In many ways, the first year of this federally-funded program has become a high profile testing ground for how universal prekindergarten might be implemented - when ambitiously designed, carefully supported, more fully funded and collaboratively implemented at the local, state and federal levels.

The manner in which EEC, LEAs and ELP agencies both monitor and support high quality program implementation and the successes and challenges experienced in this program are informing discussions about EEC's broader efforts to build a strong professional workforce and to support quality across the early education system. In the context of PEG, supporting, monitoring and enhancing quality is integrated throughout structural partnerships, both between EEC and LEAs, and the collaboration of LEAs and ELPs at the local level.

Examples of areas where the PEG model is informing the development of infrastructure necessary to sustain quality over time and across the system of early education state-wide are outlined below.

#### Structures for Collaboration and Coordination

The PEG design and coordination of funding and oversight includes an emphasis on direct service, joint decision making, and overall concentration of efforts. It requires that funding and program design decisions be made collaboratively by the local LEA and ELP partners. As we approach the second half of year two, communities will begin to plan for year three with the support of state PEG staff.

EEC has maintained the staff dedicated to the PEG grant, although specific roles of staff have changed. EEC hired the individuals charged with implementation of the PEG program carefully:

- Anita Moeller serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Program Administration. She has nearly 30 years' experience in early education. She spent 15 years as the founding executive director of the Acre Family Child Care System and as served the Commonwealth since 2001 in several roles including Head Start State Collaboration Director, EEC Regional Director, EEC Director of Interagency Partnerships, and most recently as the Director of the Preschool Expansion Grant. Anita holds a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
- Jocelyn Bowne now serves at the Director of Research and Preschool Expansion Grant

Administration. Jocelyn came to EEC from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child. Not only does she hold an Ed.D. from Harvard's Graduate School of Education with a focus on early childhood research but she has prior personal experience as a preschool teacher in New York City.

- Sarah Volkenant is the Workforce Development and Preschool Expansion Grant Specialist for the PEG program. Sarah has worked directly with preschool teachers as a coach, has directly supervised coaches and has managed a coaching program in Arizona that was closely tied with supporting programs' advancement through their QRIS. Sarah holds a Master's degree in Educational Psychology. She also has experience as a preschool teacher.

As in the first year of PEG, an Interagency Service Agreement with ESE allows for the time of their Early Childhood Team Lead, Donna Traynham. Donna brings years of experience and tremendous expertise in early education policy - her close partnership in the PEG program exemplifies the collaboration expected at all levels of program implementation. Donna serves as a consultant to the PEG team, especially related to alignment of priorities and policies of ESE and EEC, including the initiative to support inclusion, an ongoing statewide effort. She participates in team meetings, advises on policy decisions, reviews documents and attends meetings with grantees as needed.

EEC uses the balance of PEG dollars to support the longitudinal study, joint professional development, and is planning the development of information technology infrastructure that will support PEG and enhance the system overall.

#### Professional Development

While coaching was not a required element of PEG, coaching models continue to emerge from PEG grantees and as EEC considers an enhanced technical assistance and coaching model, and the integrated delivery of professional development opportunities more generally, we will look to PEG to inform its design. In three communities, PEG coaches also support public prekindergarten classrooms, and often serve as the direct connection between partners to solidify alignment of practice. EEC's Workforce Specialist is working across the system and providing opportunities for cross-community networking and professional development for coaches and other instructional leaders. PEG coaches are engaged in professional learning opportunities with other EEC funded coaches to enhance coaching practices, building collaboration among PEG coaches and with other EEC funded coaches in their regions.

#### Inclusion

As described earlier in this report, EEC is looking to PEG for innovative collaborations between LEA and ELP partners that better meet the needs of child with disabilities. Whether this results in fewer transitions for children, new ways of funding services collaboratively, joint professional development for teachers, or interventions that ultimately reduce the referrals to special education, EEC looks forward to innovations to follow. Tremendous progress has been made as PEG grantee communities are engaged in a statewide initiative that was described extensively in previous sections. EEC continues to work closely with ESE and is in the early stages of considering ways in which PEG communities might participate in professional development around particular models.

#### Tracking of Data

SASIDs continue to be assigned and EEC has developed methods for gathering data from each grantee, including TS GOLD data that is entered on each child. As the program develops, EEC will consider ways to tie elements such as these into developing systems such as the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system and the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) database.

#### Grant Monitoring

The process for monitoring via a simultaneous fiscal and program approach, the use of Regional Monitoring Teams, and the monitoring of ELPS by LEAs are all new methods of monitoring for EEC. Standard procedures for monitoring remain consistent, and inform thinking around how EEC might replicate these procedures with other programs and grants.

### Research

With the longitudinal study, EEC continues to garner tremendous lessons from the PEG experience and also determine other research resources to support EECs work more broadly. The year one evaluation results were made available to programs in an on-going manner during Year 1 and have been useful to PEG programs in determining mid-course corrections and have also received the attention of the EEC Board and EEC staff developing the agency's workforce agenda. EEC continues to build its collaborations with ESE and with the Regional Education Lab and consider opportunities to learn more about the long term success of children in the PEG program, while also looking for opportunities to inform the broader workforce efforts.

### Roll-out of New Standards

While EEC has strong licensing requirements and has had Early Childhood Program Standards since 2003, new standards have been developed including; WIDA's Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELD), Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten in the Domains of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Approaches to Play and Learning (APL). PEG communities have trained trainers in the SEL/APL Standards and trainings have been offered to the community. As attention to supporting children who are dual language learners comes into focus in year two, PEG programs in Lawrence and Springfield, who are planning for how they will offer training to teachers to learn about strategies to support dual language learners, are using the standards as a guide.

### Alignment of EEC-funded Supports

The PEG program challenges state and local partners to examine methods by which existing grant funds can be aligned to support quality programming. For example, PEG programs are regularly making use of the EEC funded supports of QRIS specialists, CFCE grantees, ECMH grantees and EPS grantees. As PEG staff work closely with local grantees, EEC is able to gain new insight into the challenges and possibilities that occur when programs with common goals align.

### Funding

Simultaneous to PEG roll out is the state's development of plans for the implementation of newly reauthorized CCDBG funding. Lessons learned from PEG will be available to inform EEC's design. For example, PEG's focus on hard to reach families, with limited transportation, no parent fees, streamlined eligibility determination, high expectations of quality, higher teacher qualifications and compensation, combined with the results of the longitudinal evaluation, provides EEC with unique insight into what these elements yield in terms of impacts on children, families, programs and the field as a whole.

With its eyes on the PEG program, the MA legislature included \$500K in EEC's fiscal year 2016 budget for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership grant. This funding supported the development of local strategic plans, based on the PEG model, for increased high quality preschool programming in high-need communities. The resulting local strategic plans have informed EEC on the ability of the 13 communities selected for the grant to serve children in high quality preschool programs, much like the current PEG model. Of these grantees, four are current PEG grantees who had the opportunity to examine their ability to expand PEG-like preschool services to children starting at age three. In reviewing the strategic plans, it is clear that expansion of high quality preschool is a need across the Commonwealth. The plans confirmed that the PEG model is one that could be expanded in other communities if funds were to become available, noting in many places that up to 50% of children are

entering Kindergarten with no prior preschool experience.

## 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.

PEG has provided the Commonwealth with the opportunity to continue to advance high quality preschool programs for children, aligned with federal High-Quality Preschool Program (HQPP) standards, by building on our strong foundation of licensing regulations, expanding provider enrollment and upward movement in the MA QRIS, with continued supports for workforce development. Ten of the twelve structural elements of a HQPP as defined in the federal application package are included across the MA quality standards. The two standards on which progress needed to be made to meet the structural elements of HQPP for PEG were the requirement for a Bachelor degree educator in each classroom and salary comparability with similar LEA positions. MA continues to be in compliance with these two remaining standards for programs funded through this grant.

Five high-need communities in Massachusetts -- Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield -- are being funded to implement full-day, full-year preschool for four-year-olds through public-private partnerships between the local public school district (the LEA) and two or three local licensed early learning providers (the ELPs). The LEAs have been granted the funds and are subcontracting with the ELPs for the direct services they provide to eligible children and families in the community. While the ELPs provide direct services to the four-year-old children, the LEAs have worked with the ELPs to create and sustain implementation plans that include all structural elements that are included in the definition of HQPP. Minor adjustments in community plans for implementation have occurred across the state, including the addition of coaching for year two and targeted, coordinated comprehensive services.

#### Description of Progress and Accomplishments: Structural Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs

EEC requires that all PEG-funded LEA and ELP partners in each community complete a Direct Service Summary (DSS) to outline an implementation plan for HQPPs for eligible children. All quality criteria are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services that will support four year-old children in developing critical development and learning competencies needed for successful learning. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's QRIS and through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation. The DSS tool was revised slightly to include more detailed information about direct services funded through the PEG grant, and the addition of a professional development plan was included in required documents for year two planning. **Proposed quality enhancement activities outlined in the plan are included in the narrative sections below.**

Explicit guidance on quality expectations from EEC is outlined in the DSS and is intended to guide implementation plan development that is driven by collaboration between the LEA and ELPs in each partnership, allowing for local level flexibility. This local control ensures the plan addresses the unique needs of the specific community. All PEG grantee plans and budgets are submitted by LEAs, and then reviewed and approved by EEC staff on an annual basis. Mid-year program adjustments based on findings from a system of continuous quality improvement and monitoring are required to be documented and submitted to EEC for approval.

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through regular EEC staff attendance at local grantee meetings and through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that occurs on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by mid-February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the

PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to analyze documented activities and observations of the LEAs and their oversight of the ELPs to ensure that federal awards are used for the authorized purpose in compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and the provisions of contracts or grant agreements and associated performance goals are achieved. This review serves as a precursor to a formal audit that took place during the summer months of 2016, modeling the monitoring that is expected at the local level. The formal audit provided the LEAs with a clear understanding of the expectations of the grant requirements that will be monitored in their formal audits of their ELPs in the winter months of 2016-2017. The formal audit provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing support if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. The review afforded EEC the opportunity to highlight sound and innovative administration and management practices that may already be in place.

To date, the first round of LEA audits of ELPs have been completed, although Boston ELP audits are still underway due to the high number of ELP partners in that particular community. An additional round of ELP audits will occur in the summer months of 2017, in advance of the formal audits of LEAs by EEC that are planned for July 2017.

### **High Staff Qualifications**

*“This is the most rewarding and satisfying job I've had in my teaching experience. I feel valued and appreciated and I feel my education and experience was not only worth it but was looked at when I was selected for this job. The master teachers were hand-picked which made me feel really good that it was getting into the program that had values and goals and that my educational philosophies were considered important” - PEG educator*

Consistent with year one, all PEG-funded classrooms continue to be staffed by at least one highly qualified educator. ELPs report that all lead educators have at least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood or closely related field, and all classroom instructional staff meet the appropriate credentialing requirements as outlined in the licensing regulations and policies established by EEC. In order to monitor this quality component, EEC requires that all LEAs submit all PEG classroom staff information so the level of education and certification can be verified by internal EEC teacher qualification systems. To date, there has been consistent compliance of this requirement, although grantees still report the challenge of identifying and hiring highly qualified staff.

The majority of PEG-funded classrooms, approximately 86 percent, are staffed with lead educators who are continuing in the PEG classroom for the second year. In discussions with one ELP, EEC learned that teacher retention in their non-PEG programs was much less than this, anecdotally reporting over 20 percent turnover of teachers. New staff continue to require additional training and orientation on quality components of PEG to ensure fidelity to the model.

### **High-quality professional development for all staff**

#### EEC-funded Professional Development Supports

In early education, the role and capabilities of the teacher/educator are pivotal to students' success. EEC offers educator professional development and financial supports aimed at advancing the continued development of educator skills and credentials. We partner in this work with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) as well as two- and four-year institutions of higher education in the state.

The EPS grant funds a network of five regional grantees for professional development opportunities. These grantees are EEC's primary vehicle through which early educators gain access to foundational professional development opportunities, including providing credit-bearing coursework, and support services including technical assistance, coaching and mentoring.

All PEG-funded programs have access to professional development through these existing structures

offered regionally by EEC funded EPS grantees, are participating in the QRIS system and will attend high quality trainings as required by existing QRIS standards over the course of the grant period. The QRIS standards include requirements for professional development aligned with core competencies as outlined by EEC and cover content related to curriculum, screening tools, assessment, supporting positive relationships, the MA Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers and/or Preschool Learning Standards, observation and documentation, working with children from diverse cultures, second language acquisition, and improving the quality of health and safety practice: managing early education and care settings that include children with allergies, special diets, and specialized feeding issues.

#### Local Plans for Professional Development

Local teams of LEA and ELP educational leadership continue to plan for intentional, integrated professional development of PEG teachers, including training, coaching, and professional learning communities.

PEG programs and classrooms are allowed five program closure days for professional development, three additional closure days outside what is typically approved by EEC for programs receiving childcare subsidies. Additionally, PEG programs in three communities were allowed up to five additional closure days in between year one and year two, after submitting a proposal that was reviewed and approved by EEC Senior Leadership. During this time, educators received additional professional development, conducted home visits, and prepared classrooms for a new cohort of students.

In many communities, QRIS required professional development content serves as a foundation to community-driven and developed content that is specific to the needs of the at the local level. With the support of an EEC Workforce Specialist, EEC encourages that PEG programs to offer joint professional development for all PEG programs in a community, with a focus on content that builds the capacity of educators around best-practices in early childhood classrooms. Some report that it is challenging to plan community-wide professional development with competing priorities and requirements of existing systems, but we continue to address this need for support and content development through facilitation of local meetings. In looking forward to year three, communities are considering how they might offer professional development opportunities that build on foundational knowledge and extend educators' capacity to bring theory to practice. Each year, programs submit a professional development plan to outline planned training and content to be covered, and often incorporate opportunities for ELPs to participate in joint professional development. The professional development plans also include the approach to integrated workforce supports, including the role of coaching, strategies to coordinate various technical assistance and consultants, the role of classroom quality data, and plans for professional learning communities. The design of these plans varies greatly and is intentionally created to meet the needs of the grantee community, although similar content related to the QRIS professional development requirements is included. As noted previously, one priority of joint professional development in year two and three is supporting inclusive practices.

PEG communities continue to report that the PEG model has allowed for more individualized, high quality professional development than is typical for their other programs. Some partners attribute this success to PEG, as it is an opportunity for partners to establish a community-wide vision for professional development, by leveraging the expertise, strengths and resources of all early learning partners. For example, in three PEG communities, Boston, Lowell, and Springfield, where the PEG classroom curriculum aligns with the curriculum of the public schools, the LEA offers professional learning opportunities through training and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on a regular basis for public school Pre-K and PEG educators on curriculum modules, with a focus on effective instructional practices. Professional development opportunities leveraged by PEG have promoted public-private partnerships across the Commonwealth. Professional learning around curriculum as

noted above is an example of cross-sector coordination that is occurring throughout the state.

In addition, grantee communities are building on system improvements at the community level for professional development of PEG and non-PEG educators. Lawrence offered a professional development opportunity for Pre-K educators in PEG, Pre-K educators at the public school, as well as public school leadership, with a focus on the Social Emotional Approaches to Play and Learning (SEL/APL). Coordination and alignment between public and private sectors has also leveraged more informal professional learning opportunities. Lowell convenes a PLC for PEG prekindergarten and public school prekindergarten educators to support implementation of curriculum modules that are being piloted, while considering the adoption of these modules in year three of PEG more broadly. Springfield PEG coaches are facilitating a PLC of PEG and non-PEG educators, including both community based and public school prekindergarten educators, who are all implementing the same curriculum.

### Coaching and Educational Leadership

*“I feel good about my job teaching in the classroom because I feel absolutely supported and convinced that my job is important.” - PEG educator*

In all five PEG communities, the LEA provides ongoing, individualized coaching support to ELP educators as part of the PEG-funded model. In Boston, an existing coaching model is providing intensive, monthly coaching to all PEG classrooms, in coordination with coaches and mentors from some ELPs. Over the course of the grant period, the LEA hopes to build the capacity of ELP coaches so an internal structure for coaching can be established. Other communities did not have existing coaching staff available to support classrooms, so PEG funds are being used to fund at least one coach, employed by the LEA, to provide classroom support to PEG educators on a monthly basis. Boston, Holyoke and Springfield feature coaches that support both PEG and public prekindergarten classrooms. Although there is variation in coaching throughout the state, there is a considerable amount of consistency in coaching models, approaches and strategies. The introduction of coaching in PEG communities has elicited conversations about the significance of reflective practice, supporting effective instructional practices, and an increased focus on using curriculum content to differentiate instruction to meet every child's learning needs.

*“In the (coaching) feedback we were given, whether it was positive or negative, it was very valuable. I never felt at any point in time that she was criticizing my teaching styles. It was just something that I can personally reflect on. She recorded me teaching. We would be able to look back at the video and say oh okay we could do that differently. I feel more confident as a teacher having her with me this year.” - PEG educator*

*“That (coaching) perspective is really helpful. At the beginning, we felt like we were good and that we were checking things off the list and we were doing well. But our coach gave us a new set of eyes and I felt like it made us better. Every time we moved on to a new unit, it was a new perspective and it made us better.” - PEG educator*

PEG coaches are also engaged in professional development and networking opportunities in year two of PEG. In some communities, they participate and support the work of the *Building Inclusive Communities* work at the local level. They also participate in a training and technical assistance series with other EEC funded coaches across the state to build capacity around effective coaching practices. EEC is also in the process of awarding a contract with a vendor to offer PEG instructional leaders, including PEG coaches and program directors, to build their capacity to determine how curriculum is selected, and how leadership can support teachers in using the curriculum, with particular attention to integrating curriculum implementation with quality child-teacher interactions and differentiation of

instruction. This series of seminars/panels and specific PLC strands for directors/coaches and other administration should begin in March 2016 and continue throughout the remainder of year two. Additionally, the majority of PEG coaches attended a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) certified observer training offered by a Teachstone certified trainer in early winter 2016. By participating in this training, coaches have a framework and a common language by which they can help support effective classroom practices with educators. The approach and stage of implementation related to this is in early development. A follow-up meeting after the CLASS training occurred in February 2016 and plans for continuing to support coaches with using the CLASS tool, with a specific focus on the instructional support domain, are underway.

As a result of coaching and additional staffing, structures have been put in place for PEG classrooms to offer more non-instructional time for educators, allowing for additional time to meet with coaches to discuss ongoing progress in goals, joint lesson planning with other educators, and professional learning communities for lead educators.

Additionally, all PEG-funded classrooms have an opportunity to participate in the longitudinal study of the PEG model that will provide communities with access to classroom quality and child-level data at least once per year. PEG communities have received community and program level data and have thought carefully about how this information should inform professional development planning for their communities. Common trends were identified and integrated into local professional development planning meetings.

#### Statewide PEG Grantee Meetings

The PEG EEC staff continue to facilitate statewide grantee meetings to promote cross-community learning, respond to emerging challenges related to implementation, and build local leadership capacity. For example, in response to challenge of fully implementing comprehensive services, EEC invited panelists from the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, a part of the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services, to offer resources around supporting children and families behavioral and mental health both statewide and regionally. After the panel, grantees participated in facilitated, cross-community discussions and planning for comprehensive services in year two. In November 2017, EEC facilitated another statewide grantee meeting to review the year one PEG evaluation data from a statewide level and brainstorm implications for implementation. Additionally, reflections and planning for summer programming in PEG was also discussed. As a result, grantee communities were connected to additional resources, a platform for ongoing planning and implementation, and learned successful practices from other communities across the state.

The PEG EEC team is in the process of planning another statewide meeting to discuss trends in specific statewide progress in the high quality preschool components as outlined in PEG and an opportunity to reflect and plan for implementation adjustments for year three. Topics will include planning for inclusion, summer programming, and transition to K activities.

#### **A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1**

Year two PEG classrooms were open by September 2016. From the beginning of implementation, all PEG classrooms have maintained at least a child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1, consistent with the expectations outlined in the EEC licensing regulations. ELPs have budgeted for additional teaching staff or substitute teaching staff to be scheduled during PEG program hours to cover classrooms, allowing for more non-instructional time for teaching staff. The protected time outside of classrooms has provided lead teaching staff more curriculum planning time within classrooms and across classrooms. Non-instructional time has also allowed for time for lead instructional staff to meet with coaches to reflect on progress of established classroom goals. A three teacher per classroom model is implemented in some PEG classrooms as a strategy to maintain appropriate ratios in consideration

for break times and staffing schedules for a full-day program. In some classrooms, the third teacher is present for most of the day to support the classroom lowering ratios below the required 10:1, while in other classrooms the third teacher is scheduled at specific times in order to alleviate other staff for breaks and planning time.

### **A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications**

PEG classrooms across the Commonwealth have all been designed and staffed to maintain a class size of no more than 20, with at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications since the beginning of the program year. In Lawrence, there are classrooms with smaller group sizes (of no more than 10 children) due to limitations in physical space and the need to maintain EEC licensing requirements. Additionally, a number of PEG-funded lead educators have a Master's degree in early childhood or a related field, and some programs report that some classrooms are staffed with more than one teacher with a Bachelor's degree. EEC has also required that lead educators be EEC teacher certified in PEG-funded classrooms. Through the monitoring process, EEC continues to support the LEA in verifying the staff qualifications in PEG-funded classrooms. In the formal audit visits to each PEG community, EEC encouraged LEA's to conduct onsite monitoring visits to PEG-funded programs and classrooms to ensure appropriate class sizes and staff qualifications.

### **A Full-Day Program**

In response to the federal requirement of a full-day program, EEC required that all PEG funded classrooms offer eligible children access to full-day (at least eight hours), full-year (52 weeks) high-quality preschool programming. An expanded program, with up to 10 hours a day (in some programs) for a full calendar year provides more access for high-risk families and their children. All PEG-funded classrooms operate on an extended full-day, full-year schedule.

PEG programs work with families who request less hours of preschool programming on an individual basis, and per EEC requirements, children in PEG funded slots must receive no fewer than six hours of PEG programming.

As mentioned in previous narrative sections, there are some PEG children who attend a public inclusion classroom in the morning and a PEG classroom in the afternoon to provide access to a full-day program. In all situations, the best interest of the child and family must be considered. Preschool services can be offered during non-traditional hours if deemed needed by the grantee community. This wrap-around model has been particularly successful in Springfield and Lowell. The Springfield PEG classrooms are co-located with public school inclusion classrooms, so the transition to a PEG classroom in the afternoon is as simple as walking the child down the hall. Lowell Public Schools and Lawrence Public Schools have worked closely with the PEG ELPs to provide transportation for children with IEPs that attend PEG classrooms in the afternoon.

### **Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities**

As part of the DSS, EEC requires that all PEG grantees create and implement plans for services provided for four year old children to be reflective of services and supports that include all children, including children with disabilities, children who are English language learners, children who are experiencing homelessness, children from refugee and immigrant families, children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and children from military families. Programs are required to plan for curriculum, instruction and assessment practices that are designed to include appropriate accommodations, modifications and individualized supports so the needs of all children are met.

Historically, while many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority of children receive their special education services in public school settings. As a result, the infrastructure didn't always exist to serve children in community-based settings. However, as the PEG sites remain in

a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings, although this remains a challenge. Many communities continue to build collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff work side by side to support all children, including eligible children with disabilities. The communities also continue to streamline the process for referring children for whom there may be concerns about development. These conversations also provide opportunities for LEAs and ELPs to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, with or without an IEP, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, should the child be identified as eligible.

In Springfield, many PEG classrooms are located in a public school-owned building alongside public school preschool classrooms; in Holyoke, the ELP classrooms are co-located in elementary school buildings that also house public school preschool classrooms as well as K-8 classrooms. Given that the public school special education staff work with the public preschool classrooms, this model of co-locating classrooms has provided an opportunity to align services for children with disabilities as the staff can work together across public and community-based programs to directly deliver early childhood special education services, provide consultation services with ELP staff and/or to work together to proactively address the healthy growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

At each subgrantee, the expectation is that 6.9 percent of children served will be children with disabilities (this target is derived from the statewide percentage of children with disabilities, as this is larger than the federal percentage). There are two primary challenges that Massachusetts has faced in serving children with disabilities in PEG classrooms. These challenges, and EEC's response to these challenges, is described in great detail in previous narrative sections. To summarize, the majority of children with disabilities in Massachusetts receive their IEP services from the public schools in public school settings. As can be gleaned from Indicator 6 data, while over 70 percent of children with disabilities receive their IEP services in partial or full inclusion settings, the majority of those services are delivered in inclusive public school settings. As a result, we expect that a large percentage of children with IEPs in these communities are already enrolled in public school inclusion classrooms. We also recognize that children are enrolled in multiple settings and, as such, EEC and PEG grantee communities continue to plan for how they might implement IEP services in PEG classrooms when appropriate. Also, because Massachusetts prioritized children who are not currently enrolled in any formal early childhood classroom, children already enrolled in public school settings, including children with disabilities, were not eligible. In response to this challenge, children with IEPs who have previous or current formal education experience are eligible for PEG in year two.

Communities feel strongly that, in many cases, provision of comprehensive services will support the children to make process and ultimately, result in *fewer* referrals to special education. Due to these factors, we expect that the 6.9 percent threshold is more likely to be met toward the end of the program year (August 2017).

As PEG programs are being considered when decisions are made about the least restrictive environment, EEC and ESE are also working to ensure that educators in PEG classrooms have the appropriate training and supports to serve children with disabilities. EEC, in collaboration with ESE and the Head Start Collaboration Office, is offering a professional development series on inclusion. At the local level, communities like Holyoke, Lowell and Springfield have offered, or plan to offer joint professional development opportunities to educators around the referral and IEP process and how to adjust instructional practices to meet accommodations outlined in the IEP.

**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**

EEC requires that efforts focused on this quality indicator should ensure that preschool curricula are age appropriate, aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks and integrated across content areas. Additionally, PEG requires that implementation of curricula should be reflective of instructional approaches that are appropriate and supportive of the ways in which four year-old children learn.

In an effort to be responsive to the variation across communities, EEC has encouraged PEG grantees to select a curriculum that meets the needs of the specific community and aligns with a community-wide vision to support Kindergarten readiness.

In response to this requirement, two PEG communities have adopted curriculum for PEG classrooms that aligns with the public school early childhood programs (prekindergarten and kindergarten) and one is piloting aligned modules. Springfield and Boston implement curriculum in the PEG classrooms that is also being utilized by public prekindergarten classrooms. These communities offered professional development to all educators and continue to support curriculum implementation through onsite coaching provided by the LEA. In year two, Lowell is piloting curriculum modules that are being implemented in the public school classrooms, and considering how they might expand this curriculum more broadly in PEG classrooms in year three. In year two, Lawrence ELPs adopted the same curriculum and have put onsite coaching supports in place to ensure effective implementation. Alternatively, other grantee communities have selected to remain with or expand upon curricula already being used by their non-PEG funded classrooms and have been historically used by their organizations. Regardless of the curriculum selected, it is a statewide requirement that all curriculum are aligned with State Early Learning and Development Standards and Curriculum frameworks as set out by EEC and ESE.

Throughout the grant period, all PEG programs continue to meet all EEC licensing requirements for health and safety standards. Additionally, each PEG partner will seek and maintain NAEYC accreditation and QRIS level 3 or seek and maintain QRIS level 4 by the end of the grant period. QRIS program participation provides a structure to monitor and support appropriate learning environments and quality improvement efforts as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), and either the CLASS or the Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale. The nature, context and content of interactions between the educators and children will be measured in the evaluation/longitudinal study and participation in the QRIS by tools such as the CLASS and ECERS. To date, the majority of PEG programs are making steady progress in NAEYC accreditation and/or the QRIS system and are on target to meet the requirements no later than the end of the grant period. Data collection for the evaluation of the PEG program began in year one, and this will continue into year two. EEC plans to work with individual communities to ensure the classroom quality data is being used to support classrooms and programs in continuous quality improvement and to inform program implementation as it relates to curriculum and classroom learning environments.

### **Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities**

As part of a cross-agency collaboration, Massachusetts adopted the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid model, providing a policy-level structure to support all programs in the mixed-delivery system an opportunity to understand and implement practices that support the individual needs of children, specifically around social and emotional development. Intensive professional development around the CSEFEL model is offered to the mixed-delivery system, and is accessible to members of the PEG programs. As a result, many PEG programs across the state consider the practices as outlined in the model as a guide and integrate components in professional development opportunities for educators, family engagement staff and comprehensive service providers.

To ensure that all PEG programs are providing individualized accommodations and supports so that all

children can access and participate fully in learning activities, EEC requires PEG programs to create and submit a plan for assessing the progress of children across developmental domains as a critical component of the standards-curriculum-instruction-assessment continuum. Systems in place to use data gathered from the comprehensive assessment system to inform continuous program improvement and instructional supports for children is key and is a requirement of PEG in each community.

As part of a comprehensive assessment system, PEG communities use a developmental screening tool to determine individual needs and developmental milestones of children and use this data to inform instruction and refer children to additional screening if needed. EEC has allowed flexibility at the local level to determine the most appropriate tool. Some communities are also in the process of identifying and implementing a home language screening tool for children.

TS GOLD is the required formative assessment tool statewide for PEG. Communities are working toward using the data collected to inform instruction and professional development for PEG educators at a local level, taking into account the needs of diverse learners, and this process is supporting identification of professional development topics related to assessment at a statewide level. PEG communities continue to discuss strategies to share data with kindergarten teachers or other elementary school administrators at the community level, in preparation for a child entering kindergarten, although attention will be paid to this as the transition of the current cohort of children occurs in the late summer of 2017.

Initial PEG community planning included discussions around what information about children's development would be helpful to share to support the kindergarten transition, the appropriate platform to share the data, and what professional development is needed to support teachers in the use of the data. In year one, the challenge of sharing assessment data for children transitioning into kindergarten became apparent, as children are often going to many different elementary schools across a community, making it challenging to identify and connect with the kindergarten teacher before the child transitions. Lawrence has made some progress in sharing some developmental information about children, in part due to relationships with the principals in local elementary schools. The Lawrence PEG partners identified places where they want to enhance their transition efforts, and are working alongside the Family Resource Center at Lawrence Public Schools and the Lawrence Learns Kindergarten Readiness initiative, to streamline processes. Other transition activities to date have largely focused on supporting the family in the transition to kindergarten, including family information sessions, visits to local elementary schools, and family events to support kindergarten registration. The EEC PEG team plans to include this topic on the agenda of the upcoming statewide grantee meeting in March so grantees can work with each other to consider other transition activities they may want to plan for this summer.

### **Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff**

All PEG funded lead educator salaries are commensurate to the public school prekindergarten educators. In most cases, this is a significant increase in salary, with the exception of some full-day Head Start programs where the salary increase is only slightly higher in PEG. ELPs in PEG communities report that identifying and hiring highly-qualified staff for PEG classrooms proved to be a challenge, as there is a shortage of highly qualified staff available in the general early childhood community in Massachusetts. Partners report that in their non-PEG funded programs, they encounter similar staffing challenges. We believe that by providing PEG educators a salary commensurate with the public school, we can anticipate increased staff retention in PEG-funded classrooms, allowing consistency and increased continuity of care for eligible children, a structure to implement a process of continuous quality improvement in PEG classrooms, and additional opportunities to build competency and overall capacity of classroom educators through ongoing professional development. In year one, lead teacher retention reached approximately 86 percent (when considered at the classroom level across PEG), and retention of assistant teacher is reported at approximately 50 percent. With this in mind, anecdotal reports from PEG grantees describe how higher compensation for lead teachers is likely a

contributing factor to increased retention in PEG. Salaries of instructional staff in PEG classrooms continues to be monitored throughout the grant period.

Although the base salary of PEG educators is comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff, the actual relative compensation of the full-time, full-year PEG educators is less than the public school staff when broken down to an hourly rate. Local K-12 instructional staff work fewer hours per day and only nine months per year, compared to the PEG educators who work longer hours per day for the entire calendar year. It is difficult to ascertain how many PEG educators have left PEG programs for a public school position, as ELPs do not have information from all staff that may have been collected during an exit interview. In year two of PEG, grantees have not reported this as a consistent challenge, although the question of how they might retain and compensate staff after the grant funding is gone is beginning to surface.

### **Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement**

EEC awarded a contract with a vendor to perform a multi-component longitudinal evaluation of the use of PEG funds in Massachusetts, to learn from the communities implementing the PEG grant, support quality improvement at the local level, and inform decisions about sustaining and expanding programs and policies developed through this grant.

Abt Associates, a research firm located in Cambridge, MA, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Boston, was awarded a contract to implement the evaluation beginning in January 2016. Abt is working closely with the EEC PEG team to plan and inform the implementation of the evaluation.

Over the years of PEG funding, the multi-component evaluation plan includes: 1) a formative evaluation of PEG implementation and PEG-participating children's development completed in year one, 2) an evaluation of the impacts (short-term and longitudinal) of PEG programs on children and families, and 3) an analysis of the costs of the quality improvements with preliminary estimates of cost-effectiveness.

In the first year, EEC was particularly interested in understanding: how each grantee is implementing their PEG programs; how implementation of PEG requirements distinguishes PEG classrooms and teachers from non-PEG classrooms in similar programs in the community; how PEG participation has shaped programs; what PEG implementation and associated inter-agency collaborations require of ELPs and LEAs; what approaches to collaboration and leadership are most effective; and the needs and skills of the population PEG programs serve.

The first year of the PEG program has shown that collaborations between public school districts and licensed early education providers can be effective at designing and implementing high-quality prekindergarten programs in a relatively short period of time. Major findings from the evaluation included:

- At the end of their year in the PEG program, the children demonstrated age-appropriate skills in math, letter-word recognition, self-regulation and the ability to develop positive relationships;
- Teachers were well compensated, well-educated and generally satisfied with their positions;
- The classroom observations conducted six months after opening found moderate to high levels of quality across three different measures of important dimensions of classroom quality; and
- The majority of families surveyed reported feeling well informed and connected to the program and confident in their ability to communicate with their child's teacher

EEC provided PEG grantees with opportunities to work across and within communities to review the

evaluation data to inform implementation plans and budgets for year two. Statewide aggregated data of classroom quality from measurement tools such as the CLASS, Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), (Classroom Observation of Early Mathematics and Teaching (COEMET), and the Observation of Language and Literacy Instruction: Snapshot of Classroom Activities (OMLIT-Snapshot) was shared with grantees in a statewide grantee meeting, and at stakeholder meetings in grantee communities. Reflections and implications for program implementation and planning for professional development were discussed. From an EEC perspective, the evaluation data helped to inform the plan to provide a professional learning opportunity for instructional leadership in PEG, including administrators, program directors, and coaches, where there will be a specific focus on understanding key considerations for curriculum, the integration of effective instructional strategies that lend to positive child outcomes, and the role of leaders in supporting educators. Training has been provided to all coaches in year two in one of the classroom observation tools that will be a consistent component of the evaluation throughout the four years of the program. This will support coaches in understanding the data provided by the evaluation and more effectively working with teachers to improve the quality of child-teacher interactions.

As part of the evaluation, there is also interest in understanding who is choosing to attend PEG classrooms, the areas of strengths and challenges in these children's development and the growth that occurs during PEG participation into elementary school. In year two and beyond, EEC is also interested in evaluating impacts and understanding the cost of quality improvements, in addition to continued monitoring of implementation.

### **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**

*“For the families, the program is great for them. My relationship with parents is so much richer than other centers I've worked in, and that has to do with us building a bridge - making them feel comfortable in classroom, inviting them to monthly events, even just taking the time to talk to parents at these events, and having events specifically for parents. In the beginning of the year, tough, but now they like coming into classroom and they're comfortable.” - PEG educator*

*“Each teacher is very attentive to the child and they notice anything happening or differences in the child's day and they communicate this to the parents. I feel like they (the teachers) are parents as well.” - PEG parent*

Plans to deliver high-quality comprehensive services and community and family engagement strategies have been required of all PEG grantee communities from the beginning stages of the implementation year. Like other PEG-required high quality preschool program indicators, EEC provided guidance in the DSS tool to every grant community with the expectation that each community develop and submit a plan and budget that meet expected programmatic enhancements.

All PEG communities include a Head Start partner and many communities have adopted components of family engagement and comprehensive service strategies based on the Head Start model. Additionally, as part of the QRIS, programs are required to be trained in and adopt the Strengthening Families framework. In most non-Head Start community based organizations, offering a menu of comprehensive services at this level is a new practice, but has been refined in year two based on challenges and lessons learned from year one of implementation.

There remains a significant amount of variation in community level plans to offer comprehensive services, as some services are being offered directly by the LEA partner, some via PEG funds, some accessed via other EEC-grant funded initiatives and others are contracting services to existing community vendors. Grantees continue to report that these additional services allow for greater access

to specialized support staff, including but not limited to literacy specialists, mental health consultants, nurses, occupational therapists, vision and screening services, and speech therapists.

In year one, all communities discussed the ongoing challenges in providing these services to children, highlighting the challenge of creating a streamlined process for creating access to services for children who are in various ELPs in one grantee community. In places where the provision of services varies across all ELPs, LEAs report the challenge of monitoring the provision of these services, and in response, have put clear expectations in place around what documentation will be collected during the audits to verify implementation of comprehensive services paid for by the grant. EEC staff continue to support communities through ongoing technical assistance and attendance at monthly grantee meetings to ensure comprehensive services are being adequately funded and accessible moving forward. Additionally, reflecting on and planning for comprehensive services in year two of PEG was a topic at a statewide grantee meeting in June 2016.

In response to the lessons learned in year one, grantee communities have made progress in the effective implementation of these services. Overall, grantees have refined the approach to comprehensive services, and, in most cases, have a more targeted approach to what services they provide and at an increased intensity. Furthermore, grantees across the state have highlighted the need to increase and streamline access to mental and behavioral health services for children in PEG. In year two, Boston ELPs are all contracting with a community organization that provides mental and behavioral health consultation for children, onsite technical assistance for educators, and training. In Lowell, a comprehensive service and family engagement coordinator was a newly funded position in PEG and provides oversight and coordination of all comprehensive services and general resource referrals for families. Lawrence also increased the intensity of mental and behavioral health supports for children in year two. One ELP in particular funded a new mental health consultant position that provides support to children and families. In planning for year two, Springfield LEAs and ELPs created a comprehensive service menu to provide programs guidance on what specific services would be available to all children, regardless of the program they are enrolled in. ELPs in Springfield and Holyoke included onsite mental health consultation in their plans for year two.

In Springfield, Lowell, and Lawrence, plans for year two comprehensive services also include onsite speech/language, occupational and physical therapy, in some cases contracted directly by the public school but also through contracts with local community organizations. Various technical assistance providers working with children and families in PEG programs has led to local level efforts to coordinate the team of technical assistance providers available to staff in the early care and education programs. The procedures and guidance for the coordination of services is in development across grantee communities.

Every PEG community continues to engage with local EEC-funded CFCE grantee coordinators and other community partners to conduct outreach and provide support to educators working with families enrolled in the community partner programs, with a particular focus on outreach strategies for hard-to-reach children and families, including those not currently served by early education and care programs. Toward these efforts, all PEG grantee communities have hired at least one family engagement specialist to work directly with families of PEG-funded children. In most communities, the family engagement staff are bilingual and support families with translated materials and resources. Family engagement staff in each community work collaboratively with educators and leadership of public schools and community based providers to define and implement a community-level strategy to integrate family engagement strategies throughout the preschool programs.

*“English is my 4<sup>th</sup> language, not a native speaker. I am more than satisfied. My kid really improved. The program helps us where we cannot reach as parents, as we have some limits. We would like [him] to also become independent. The way of figuring that out really came from this program. I want to say thank-you.” - PEG parent*

Although there is a significant amount of variation in the intensity and frequency of family engagement activities in PEG communities, PEG communities strive to meet families' individual needs as much as possible. The following activities are common practices across the PEG grantees.

#### Community Events and Resources

- "Parent/Family Night" - Families are invited to the program to engage in curriculum related activities with their children in the classroom/program setting. Families are also provided resources related to the curriculum to extend children's learning to the home environment, as well as cultural events that reflect the diversity of the children in the program, such as a family cooking night.
- Supporting literacy through resources and community events- Family engagement staff offer events to educate parents and families on the importance of language and literacy development through events at local libraries and parent groups to support early reading.
- Newsletters and Parent message boards - Programs create documents that include program highlights and tips for parents.
- Open House - Families are invited to the child's program at the beginning of the school year in an effort to support the transition into the program.

#### Information Sessions and Program Orientation

- Parent/Family information sessions - Program staff invite families to sessions on topics of interest based on a family needs assessment. Topics include but are not limited to financial literacy, safety practices for the home, and developmentally appropriate expectations.
- PEG orientation for families - most PEG communities introduced an orientation for incoming parents at the beginning of the program year to review the features of the program, provide guidance on program expectations and policies, discuss services available for children and families, and introduce key personnel to parents.

#### Transition to Kindergarten Supports

- Grantee communities work collaboratively with the public schools to support the transition to Kindergarten. ELPs offer onsite registration and outreach events for families throughout the spring and summer and help families' complete required enrollment paperwork.

*"It's the readiness books program and I wish everyone had an opportunity. This has taught me to enjoy reading too and it not only changed my child but changed my motivation and willingness to read. It's changed me too."-PEG parent*

#### Targeted Focus and Individual Supports

- Family Support Specialists are onsite in PEG programs in four of the five grantee communities. The family support staff often speak multiple home languages, participate in home visits before and during the program year, and provide families with access to resources that meet their individual needs.
- Home visits - Family engagement staff and educators develop plans to facilitate outreach to families in the home at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needed. The frequency and strategies implemented vary between programs and communities, but programs offer families information about child development and age-appropriate expectations.

#### Creating a network of support

- Connecting families to each other for support - Parent support groups are delivered in one

community as a way to promote a network of support for families.

- Community-based resources - PEG programs connect families to resources in their community that may not be directly provided in the PEG program.

*PEG evaluation focus group findings include that families feel the program has offered more social connections for families, allowed for a parents to seek and maintain employment and go back to school.*

### **Evidence-based health and safety standards**

Quality program standards, including evidence-based health and safety standards, for all early care and education settings have been adopted by the Commonwealth. These include EEC licensing of preschool programs, the QRIS, Federal Head Start Performance Standards, and NAEYC accreditation standards. The EEC licensing regulations are recognized as some of the most ambitious in the country. Ensuring all programs are frequently monitored and well-supported is crucial to the health and safety of children, and to align the state's monitoring performance with its robust regulations, EEC continues to develop new differential monitoring processes that will maximize the utilization of agency staff, enable more frequent interaction between EEC staff and programs, and acquire additional licensing staff to improve caseload ratios.

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

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

All PEG-funded HQPP slots for eligible children reported here are considered new preschool slots, as Massachusetts focused on expanding access to preschool rather than improving quality in existing state-funded classrooms. None of the PEG-funded classrooms were supported by any of the grant funding that EEC has considered its key support for state preschool. As of December 1, 2016, PEG programs were serving 25 percent of eligible children in the five PEG communities. Expenses that contribute to the cost per slot are based on the remaining amount total funds available for grantee communities to serve eligible children (\$14,250,000), after subtracting the LEA funding contribution to the PEG longitudinal evaluation (\$648,617.00). The remaining sum after this calculation (\$13,601,383), divided by the number of eligible children to be served in new preschool slots (755 children), results in the cost per slot of \$18,015. PEG funds supported 752 children enrolled as of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, but programs were not fully enrolled, so we used our target enrollment in calculating the cost per slot. The only difference seen between actuals and target spending in year two is a small amount of the funds subgranted to LEAs were unspent due to delayed program openings and staff hiring in year one. These funds were rolled forward to be spent in year two. Although this change potentially increases the cost per child in year two, EEC required that the additional funds be spent on one time costs, and, as such, are not considered a change in the ongoing cost of running this program.

### **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.

EEC has developed a multi-pronged strategy to ensure that each subgrantee is effectively implementing HQPP that includes strong partnerships between EEC and subgrantee communities, as well as collaboration among partners within and across communities. These collaborative structures allow for careful monitoring and evaluation of program implementation, continuous program improvement, and program quality results.

#### Attendance at Local Grantee Meetings

Since the earliest stages of implementation, EEC's staff have supported subgrantees in the development of their local PEG programs. EEC staff have at times served in the role of a mediator and at other times have delivered answers to policy questions generated as programs looked for guidance on allowable implementation practice. In addition to this local-level support, EEC successfully completed a PEG Implementation Guide that provides general policy guidelines to answer questions that have surfaced over the course of the first year of PEG.

#### Statewide Grantee Meetings

EEC facilitates statewide grantee meetings at least twice per year to discuss general program updates and provide opportunities to discuss successes and challenges in implementation. Meetings have featured panels, presentations of evaluation data, across-community discussions around specific quality components, and time for community level planning. The network of learning has elicited positive responses from grantees, and contributes to the overall effort to ensure program quality.

#### Longitudinal Evaluation

Over the years of PEG funding, the multi-component evaluation plan includes: 1) a formative evaluation of PEG implementation and PEG-participating children's development, 2) an evaluation of the impacts (short-term and longitudinal) of PEG programs on children and families, and 3) an analysis of the costs of the quality improvements with preliminary estimates of cost-effectiveness.

In the first year of the evaluation, EEC provided PEG grantees with opportunities to improve data-literacy and expected communities to use data to inform implementation plans for year two. This strategy will continue in preparation for year three. The second phase of the evaluation will focus on the impacts of the program currently underway.

#### Fiscal and Program Audits

EEC requires that all PEG-funded partners in each community complete a DSS document to outline an implementation plan for HQPPs for eligible children. All quality criteria are used to guide collaborative local system-building efforts for preschool expansion services. These quality criteria encompass many of the elements measured through EEC's QRIS, those outlined by NAEYC Accreditation and include the HQPP from the USDOE.

Explicit guidance on quality expectations from EEC is outlined in the DSS document and is intended to guide implementation plan development, driven by collaboration between the LEA and ELPs in each

partnership, allowing for local level flexibility to ensure the plan addresses the unique needs of the community. All PEG grantee plans are submitted, and reviewed and approved by EEC staff on an annual basis.

Ongoing monitoring of quality components occurs through a fiscal and programmatic monitoring/audit process that is scheduled to occur on an annual basis. EEC fiscal and programmatic staff conducted a monitoring visit to every PEG community by February 2016 to serve as a technical assistance fiscal and program compliance review for the PEG grant recipients. The purpose of the review was to introduce and train subgrantees on the monitoring procedures we expected them to use twice a year with each of their ELPs. One formal monitoring visit occurred in the first year before EECs audit of LEAs in the summer of 2016 and the initial audit in year two is finalized (with the exception of one LEA). The review and formal audit provided an opportunity for EEC to assess all LEA's compliance with the terms and conditions of the PEG grant, as well as, providing technical assistance if findings or issues of non-compliance were identified. EEC highlighted sound and innovative administration and management practices that were already in place.

As a follow-up to the monitoring process in year one, meetings were scheduled with the Superintendent of the LEA and the executive leadership of the community based partners to discuss the findings of the technical assistance and monitoring visits and maintain the connection with leadership in each community. These meetings proved to be beneficial in year one and are underway in year two.

#### Regional Monitoring Teams

Three Regional Monitoring Teams (RMTs), one in each participating community, consist of an EEC Regional Director or designee, the, regional staff currently responsible for oversight of related state grant activities and initiatives, and program licensors. The RMTs assess progress on grant milestones in each community and discuss specific successes and challenges as needed, while informing areas of focus in LEA audits of ELPs. RMT's discuss progress within the QRIS system, identification of potential barriers, and identifying technical assistance that may be required. EEC licensing staff participate to discuss any regulatory considerations, and offer a broad perspective of the organizations that are involved in PEG. The RMT's are fully implemented and the second round of meetings was completed in January 2017.

#### Local Partnerships

Local partnerships provide the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's plan. Each LEA serves as the state's subgrantee for funding. The collaborations between the public schools and service providers have supported organized and focused planning for the transition to kindergarten, family engagement and comprehensive services, and professional learning for educators and leadership.

While details of coordinating sharing child assessment data between PEG and kindergarten teachers/administrators is underway, some key components of transition to kindergarten activities are planned to include;

- Organized kindergarten registration events held jointly between PEG programs and the public schools
- Records review to ascertain if the PEG programs already have on file information that is needed for kindergarten registration that can be sent directly to the school district
- Planning for sharing of information between PEG teachers and kindergarten teachers

Each community made their own decisions about the best organization of resources and services, given the expertise and capacity of each partner.

- In Boston, for example, a strong early childhood department that has invested a great deal in its

own internal curriculum and professional development efforts has taken a leadership role in organizing joint professional learning activities, and supporting curriculum implementation through coaching

- Across all communities, the LEAs and ELPs are working together to organize professional development. Most communities are implementing subcommittees under the leadership of the EECs Workforce Specialist to organize their planning. By collaborating they can reduce costs of training and leverage existing resources more intentionally
- Some communities share consultants that provide comprehensive services to reduce costs and improve coordination
- Family engagement staff work together to offer joint family events

The collaborative approach and the ability to plan locally has allowed each community to think creatively about the best ways to build on prior collaborations in the community. The varied nature of the programs in each community reflect the different landscape and needs in each. This flexibility has allowed for the braiding of PEG, subsidy and Head Start funding in Boston, which reduced the cost per child.

Each subgrantee community was chosen in part due the high level of needs of children. As a result, communities have experience serving children with high needs including English language learners, homeless children and children in foster care. Programs are able to continue the high quality services that they have always provided to these families.

- The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness has been used to provide guidance around the resident requirements for these programs. As of December, 19 of the children being served are known to be homeless, and instable housing and associated attendance problems have also been reported anecdotally across the communities.
- Grantees anecdotally report the increased number of children that are involved in the child welfare system as participating in PEG in comparison to year one. As of December, 64 children enrolled are involved in the child welfare system.

As the programs mature, the integration of services and opportunities to reduce costs through more efficient collaboration continue. Comprehensive services is one area that has proven more expensive for programs than originally planned. Some programs planned to use contractors with whom they already had relationships to provide services, but planning for jointly services continue. Programs are considering whether they can pool funds to hire staff collectively, or to fund the use of Head Start staff or public school staff, such as a nurse, behavioral specialist, and specialized therapists. Programs that share the same location have had greater success in sharing these services.

Additionally, the fact that the public schools, who provide services for children with IEPs, are part of the collaboration has supported conversations about the best ways to ensure children in community programs receive services. Due to the complexity of this, communities are considering solutions such as finding ways to provide services in community programs, wrapping attendance in a PEG classroom around the inclusion classes in the public school and providing training for educators.

#### 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).

In the summer of 2013, Massachusetts applied for a grant through the National Governor's Association (NGA), *Policy Academy-State Strategies to Improve Early Learning Outcomes*. This provided Massachusetts an opportunity to draft a comprehensive Birth to Grade 3 Policy Framework, and formalize structures for collaboration and coordination of early learning policies and programs through the creation of a cross-sector NGA Policy state team, representative of all three state agencies under the Education Secretariat (EEC, ESE and DHE), as well as early childhood partners.

In the spring of 2015, the team expanded to include additional representation from our state's education agencies, including our state's family engagement policy specialist, Head Start State Collaboration Director, and various education specialists. The team also included partners within health and human service agencies, including early intervention, home visiting and early childhood mental health. Under a new Governor and Secretary of Education, our state's Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group is now under the leadership of Undersecretary Ann Reale.

The work of the advisory has resulted in valuable partnerships, and an unequivocal commitment to expanding our work and to ensure alignment with our vision for Birth to Grade 3 systems as outlined in *Building the Foundation of Future Success for Children from Birth through Grade 3*. The Advisory Group continues to serve as the state advisory for PEG and ensures that we coordinating to strengthen services in the infant, toddler and early elementary space and opens the opportunity to engage critical partners in the PEG planning.

##### 1. Transitions for Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age Five

(a) Our LEAs and ELPs have worked diligently to engage hard-to-reach families in PEG. While each community varied in its outreach strategies, there was an intentional and agreed upon goal of ensuring that education agencies worked to educate families about the benefits of preschool. Communities targeted outreach efforts to underserved and high need populations, including immigrant communities and homeless shelters.

PEG programs in four communities are located in various locations and provide access to services for families across the community. This has been largely successful, although looking forward, communities are evaluating the location of PEG programs to determine whether they might relocate certain PEG classroom locations to areas with a higher demand for services.

As mentioned in previous sections, EEC and ESE are working together to provide support to PEG grantees to consider ways in which they might adjust referral and placement processes at the local level to include more children with disabilities in PEG classrooms.

(b) The PEG team regularly attends local PEG meetings to monitor PEG implementation and to strategize when challenges arise. While no major concerns have arisen regarding increased costs for other programs serving young children, the PEG team is cognizant of the possible challenges and will work proactively to address them. Concerns about attention to infant/toddler services, workforce development, as well as ensuring that identification of Bachelor degree teachers for PEG doesn't destabilize other early childhood classrooms, remain of utmost importance.

## 2. Transitions for Programs Serving Children from Kindergarten to Grade 3

(a) The PEG plan includes the use of TS GOLD as well as other standardized assessments of child outcomes outlined in our evaluation plan. The data from these assessments will inform professional development and family engagement practices, and will also provide EEC with information on where children are developmentally when they enter kindergarten. With representation from ESE, there are opportunities for coordination of transition practices as children move from preschool into kindergarten, including how to share data between prekindergarten and kindergarten educators, a priority in year two.

Grantees report that to overcome the challenges of sharing specific developmental information about children as they transition to kindergarten, time must be spent making connections and building relationships with principals and other local elementary school administrators. Grantee communities are at various stages of connecting with these administrators, but there has been progress in smaller communities where it might be more likely the PEG program will know exactly what school a child will attend in kindergarten. For example, in Lawrence, ELPs have been paired with specific elementary schools that the current PEG children are likely to attend next year and they are engaging in a planning process to share administrative and developmental information to support the transition to kindergarten.

Given the requirement for joint professional development, the PEG program provides early childhood administrators and educators in the five PEG communities with the opportunity to think about the alignment of learning environments, curriculum, instruction, assessment and family engagement opportunities across preschool and kindergarten

(b) One of the goals for the state's Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group include the development of a comprehensive policy agenda that increases access to high quality early childhood programs and ensuring that children move through their early learning years with continued high quality experiences that ultimately lead to proficiency across developmental domains. Many of our PEG communities envision increased access to high quality preschool programs as a critical lever to improving child outcomes in the early years and beyond.

As discussed above in the overview, we see this work as only being possible when local governance structures exist that allow for public and community-based preschool and kindergarten partners to collaborate together. Although this is complex issue, PEG programs are beginning to make more intentional connections with specific elementary schools and public school administrators.

(c) Plans for engaging parents and families in transitions between preschool and kindergarten are included as part of the grant's family engagement strategies. Each PEG community either has existing systems for engaging families in moving from preschool into kindergarten or they are collaboratively developing them as part of their PEG plans. Boston has a comprehensive approach to support all children in the city as they enter kindergarten; this initiative is called Countdown to Kindergarten. Other PEG communities have similar types of transition initiatives underway. Additionally, EEC in partnership with ESE, facilitated regional grantee meetings to enhance the coordination of grantee services, including local efforts to support families with the transition to kindergarten. Although some progress has been made to support these activities, this will remain an area of focus in year two and will be featured on the agenda of an upcoming statewide meeting.

(d) Steps you have taken to build upon or align:

(1) Child learning standards and expectations;

As a state, we work very closely with our state education partners to ensure that our standards and expectations are attainable and aligned across systems. As mentioned in previous sections, the Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group developed a statement that outlines these aligned expectations and we see our state standards (found in our Curriculum Frameworks) as one way that we ensure children have access to high quality early learning experiences.

(2) Teacher preparation, credentials, and workforce competencies;

Massachusetts participated in a learning table sponsored by the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) and BUILD to focus on teacher preparation, credentials and workforce competencies in the B-3 space. The state team focused on moving forward a draft Birth to Grade 3 certification framework. The work of this state team will be linked to our state B-3 Advisory Group and PEG will benefit from the work of this group. As part of a broad workforce agenda, EEC is also evaluating and revising educator core competencies and categories of study that will inform credentialing moving forward.

(3) Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment Systems

As mentioned in section 1(c), Massachusetts is currently using TS GOLD in many of its preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Conversation about our state's Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment System, including how to strengthen and align screening and assessment practices across the Birth to Grade 3 continuum, are underway with our state Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group.

(4) Data systems; and

EEC is in the process of strengthening its data infrastructure for subsidized early education services. Discussions about how to incorporate data needs of the PEG program are underway. Children enrolled in PEG have been assigned a SASID. As the state continues to build its longitudinal data systems, having SASIDs for PEG enrolled children will allow us to understand the impact that PEG has on children as they move into the K-12 system.

(5) Family engagement strategies

All of our PEG programs are required to use the Strengthening Families framework to guide its work around family engagement. PEG communities look to Head Start's family engagement framework to guide community and program level practices. As the state rolls out its PEG evaluation, plans for how to better understand family engagement practices and the impact of those practices on child and families has been reviewed and shared with grantees. Attention continues to be paid to identifying new ways that the resources of each program, the public schools and EEC can be leveraged to increase the connections with families of children three years old and younger and conveying to them information about the PEG programs and the importance of prekindergarten.

## 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*.

Massachusetts has met its target for obtaining non-Federal matching funds via allocation of Chapter 70 dollars.

Chapter 70 education aid is the Commonwealth's primary program for distributing its portion of PreK-12 public education funding to the state's 328 local and regional school districts. The Chapter 70 formula is written to ensure that each school district has the resources to provide an adequate education for all of its students. The formula accomplishes this by taking into account the ability of each district to contribute to the education costs of its students. The formula's broad goal is to ensure that less wealthy districts receive more state aid than wealthier ones, which have more of an ability to contribute.

In state fiscal year 2017, the Commonwealth is spending \$43.2M in state dollars through Chapter 70 funding to support prekindergarten students. Of this, \$12.6M are allocated to the five communities where the PEG program is in place. This amount exceeds that \$5.9M required of PEG for the state match. EEC is able to claim these funds for our matching requirement for PEG Grant because no other agency, including ESE (the agency that administers Chapter 70), count these funds as a matching requirement towards any other programs.

### **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.

Massachusetts continues to build on the existing system framework for birth to grade three alignment efforts. Massachusetts has made intentional efforts to support the initial roll out PEG, and continues to work extensively with each grantee to plan and implement local birth through grade three efforts, monitoring their progress, and making recommendations for enhancing the work in year two of implementation.

The establishment of cross sector partnerships, at the state level and the local level, is a success to report in year two, as considerable efforts have been made towards this goal. Although we are confident to report our success in accomplishing the foundation of this work at the state and local level, we recognize the need to continuously support this work in year two as a priority. In addition to the Birth to Grade 3 Advisory Group, there are other state level partnerships that indicate our progress toward creating a more seamless progression of supports.

· As described in earlier sections of this report our LEAs and ELPs worked diligently throughout

the spring, summer and fall to actively reach out to hard-to-reach families to engage them in learning about PEG opportunities. In local meetings, communities continue to discuss strategies for improving their outreach to hard-to-reach families. These efforts include collaboration with CFCE grantees, as well as other community organizations that support early intervention services. Outreach to engage families who have children in early intervention programs was challenging in year one, partly due to the eligibility criteria of no prior formal education experience in PEG and the fact these children were frequently referred to inclusive preschool settings when they were three years old. In recognition of this challenge, and to support the enrollment of children coming from other education programs during the birth to grade three years, EEC provided flexibility to this requirement, allowing up to 20 percent of enrolled children to have had prior formal education experience. This flexibility was offered in December 2016, so we expect this will have a greater impact in year three when outreach efforts to these children can begin earlier.

- In year one, the PEG team began work with our state 619 coordinator, Head Start State Collaboration Office, ESE Early Learning team, and EEC inclusion specialist to develop joint professional development on inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities can have their needs met in community-based programs. This collaborative effort to co-construct a professional development plan with PEG communities (including ELPs, Head Start Disability Coordinators and public school early childhood special education staff) came about as challenges related to inclusion of children with disabilities were being discussed in communities. This joint professional development will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the work of the early childhood field to successfully include children with disabilities in all settings, including community-based programs. This effort also features planning around placement of children with IEPs in PEG classrooms, and the provision of service delivery models for these children.

In addition to effective state level efforts toward this goal, there has been considerable efforts at the local level in each grantee community.

#### Children with IEPs

While many children with IEPs attend community-based programs, the majority of them have received their special education services in public school settings. As the PEG sites were identified and in many cases designed, communities were in a unique position to collaborate to better serve children with disabilities in community-based settings and many proposed collaborative models where ELP staff and public school early childhood staff support children with disabilities. The partnership between district and ELPs has allowed them to build an infrastructure to properly refer children. LEA and ELP staff meet regularly and as part of these meetings, the communities have been building the process for referring children. These conversations also allow for community partners to work together to determine how to best respond to a child's needs, and the most appropriate placement for the delivery of IEP services, if the child is identified as eligible.

#### Cross-sector Partnerships to Support Kindergarten Transitions

Through PEG, the Commonwealth has an opportunity to strengthen formative assessment practices in the preschool and kindergarten space and to create better alignment in assessment practices and the transition of data between preschool and kindergarten. Towards this efforts, PEG communities are creating plans to share prekindergarten data in PEG classrooms with kindergarten teachers in the local public schools. This practice was challenging to implement in year one, and this remains an area of focus for year two and beyond. As stated previously, this will be featured on the agenda of the upcoming statewide grantee meeting. During this time, communities will be presented with information about state-level efforts to support transitions to kindergarten through existing grants

and initiatives. Communities will have an opportunity to share practices across communities to inform planning for the transition of the current PEG cohort.

In year two, some PEG communities are investing time in establishing relationships with local elementary school principals as a strategy to enhance the coordination of Kindergarten transition activities for families and collaboration between PEG programs and Kindergarten educators. Additionally, All PEG communities are planning events to support families in the Kindergarten registration process. In many cases, PEG communities are offering these events to families at various times and locations to provide increased access to support. Additionally, PEG programs are offering families' information about required documentation for the application process and resources about what to expect in Kindergarten classrooms.

**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 stated in prior sections of this report, the only state funding provided to preschool programs comes in the form the grants to programs. All of EEC's state dollars at this time are allocated to quality supports and all funds to increase access to early education are sourced from CCDBG funds. Therefore, PEG funding represents an innovative approach to preschool financing that EEC hopes is replicated and replaced with state dollars by the end of the grant period.

All funds received through PEG have been allocated as required in the support of the creation of new preschool slots. Specifically:

Only 5 percent of funds have been retained by EEC for program administration and 95 percent of funds have been granted to LEAs to support expansion of new slots in licensed ELP programs.

Each LEA has retained no more than 5 percent for program administration, thereby passing 95 percent of local funds on to fund direct service.

ELP programs have been designed specifically to meet the PEG requirement of high quality (as described in detail above.)

All program implementation has taken place in the five high needs communities outlined in EEC's application for PEG funds: Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, Holyoke and Springfield.

As of December 1, 2016, programs were serving 752 of the original target of 755 children. Continued enrollment since that has increased the number of children served. The braiding of funding streams in Boston has also allowed that community to serve more children than originally planned and MA has identified 840 potential slots in PEG-funded programs each year.

## 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.

Expenditures are defined as money that has been liquidated, not money obligated or encumbered. Expenditures are funds that have been liquidated for services rendered between January 1 and December 31, 2016. Funds are considered obligated under two circumstances. The first is when year two funds have been encumbered in the state accounting system prior to December 31, 2016. For example, funds that have been encumbered in the state accounting system for year two include funds for the longitudinal system as well as funds in the contracts for the LEAs for year two of programming that began in September of 2016 and will end in August 2017. The other circumstance fund obligation includes personnel costs (payroll, associated fringe and indirect) are considered obligated because staff are hired and we anticipate funding their positions throughout the entire grant period. It should be noted that personnel costs are not encumbered in the state accounting system.

The vast majority of the funds are encumbered through contracts, in particular contracts with LEAs for 95 percent of the funds. These contracts were put in place in August of year two for services that the LEAs and ELPs (through subcontracts with the LEAs) would render between September 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017. All year 2 PEG funds subgranted to the LEAs were to be used for services during this time period, so that PEG funds could be used to fund a full program year. In year two, EEC made a decision to move to a cost reimbursement process with LEAs and funds will not be paid to the LEA until invoices are submitted. As a result, EEC has only expended funds from the year 2 budget to cover EEC staff and fringe costs, travel costs, a small portion of the longitudinal evaluation and payment for the first three months of programming to LEAs. The bulk of the evaluation costs and the amounts subcontracted to the LEAs and budgeted for year two will not be spent until later in year three, as planned. Continuing with this practice, EEC anticipates obligating year three funds starting September 1, 2017. These funds will be liquidated by August 31, 2018 in order to fund the program year that starts in year three of the grant.

When we review our expenditures and encumbered funds for year two, we find that there is a discrepancy of \$595,568.80 based on the approved budget from February 2016 (this is currently in Grads360). However, a budget amendment was submitted September 2016 and approved in January 2017. The recent budget amendment more accurately reflects actual year two obligations and expenditures, leaving a discrepancy of only \$25,959.55. This discrepancy resulted largely from carryover of year one LEA funds to year two. Additionally, the discrepancy resulted from an adjustment to the contract for the longitudinal evaluation, adding additional funds to the scope of work in year three. There were some marginal changes in staffing that occurred in year one of the grant that contributed to the remainder of the discrepancy. Anita Moeller, who was the Director of PEG, was promoted to Deputy Commissioner for Program Administration, and her time on the grant was reduced, while Jocelyn Bowne and Sarah Volkenant were both promoted and received salary increases. Travel and state technical assistance costs were also lower than expected leaving funds in these lines unspent.

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).

EEC submitted a budget amendment in September 2016 that was approved by the USDOE in January 2017. Based on this amendment EEC is not planning on any major adjustments to its budget or

implementation of PEG in year two. A following changes that will allow for adaptation to lessons learned in year one are planned and were detailed in this amendment.

Maintaining the funding for the Inter-agency Service Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to maintain Donna Traynham as a member of the PEG team. These funds will allow Donna to continue to contribute one day per week of her time to supporting PEG activities. Her involvement not only builds the team's capacity to move initiatives across the two state agencies but also serves as an important model to the field of the partnership between early education and elementary education expected of the grant.

Increasing the funds for the Longitudinal Study in year two and three to support an impact evaluation of the PEG programs and decreasing the funds for this study in year four.

Decreasing funding for information technology.

Increasing funding for joint professional development. As the implementation of PEG is in full swing and the Workforce Development Specialist has been working with communities for a year to develop their integrated professional development plans, money will now be allocated for a contractor to develop a professional learning community, supporting coaches and programmatic educational leadership in considering best practice in supporting teachers' use of a curriculum, implementation of high quality teacher-child interactions and differentiation of instruction.

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.

Central to EEC's planning for sustainability has been the review of strategic plans submitted by the communities who received planning grant funding in year one of the PEG programs. The purpose of the planning grant was to support communities in identifying the local infrastructure, funding and supports that would be needed to increase access to high quality preschool programs, addressing all the high quality components of PEG, to children ages 2.9 through kindergarten entry. Thirteen communities were awarded the Planning Grant in 2016, Athol, Brockton, Cape Cod, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, North Adams, Pittsfield, Somerville, Springfield and Worcester. The themes identified in these strategic plans were communicated to the MA legislature in the fall of 2016. The strategic plans documented strong need for both expanded access and quality improvements to early education opportunities for three and four year old children in the thirteen communities.

- Many communities noted the need to provide greater access to children not currently attending any formal early education program.
- All communities noted a strong need for affordable early education among families just over 200 percent of the poverty line and ineligible for any childcare subsidies, yet unable to bear the full cost.
- Transportation was noted as a need for families in all communities but only some included the provision of transportation in their plans; others looked at how programs might be distributed geographically to address this need.

All plans also noted the need for on-going professional development supports for educators, in addition to efforts to ensure a competent and well-educated workforce through degree requirements and other measures of competency for educators.

- On-going professional supports such as trainings, coaching and professional learning communities were considered in all plans.

- Efforts to develop pathways to degree attainment were included in many plans through collaboration with local institutions of higher education.
- Ways to increase educator compensation were considered as important to recruitment and retention, although not all plans committed to salaries commensurate with those in public schools.

The importance of collaboration between public schools, early education providers and other local stakeholders was acknowledged in all plans, both through the appreciation expressed for the value of the collaborative planning process and the integration of such collaborations in the leadership and decision making structures.

- The public school was identified as the lead agent in all but one plan.
- All plans outlined collaborative management structures that included local early education providers.
- Many plans included an advisory group or steering committee to provide guidance to the community management, which included a broader group of stakeholders in the community, such as institutions of higher education and business leaders.
- The planning process provided the opportunity to develop a local system-wide vision for early education and effectively identify and deploy resources.

One consistent message conveyed by all planning grant communities was that the planning process was an essential step in building the relationships and shared vision that is needed to implement publicly funded preschool through a public-private mixed delivery system. In response, the legislature including funding for planning grants in year two. These grants may be used to provide new communities and opportunity to start the planning process or to support continued development of local plans to build in the specificity needed to transition to implementation and systematic feedback on the planning process to EEC.

EEC is also supporting continued conversations about sustainability in each of the PEG communities. Each year, the Commissioner of EEC meets with each school district Superintendent and the executive leadership of the ELPs to discuss the PEG program and local plans for preschool expansion. A primary topic of conversation at this year's meetings, which are scheduled to occur in February and March will be the lessons learned from PEG so far and how these lessons are shaping the communities' plans for preschool expansion when PEG funding ends. Each community has engaged in its own planning for sustainability locally, and EEC is encouraging communities to think about how to blend local, state and federal funds to support a mixed delivery model. Four of the five communities engaged in the grant funded planning process in year one. These efforts provided important needs assessment information to identify the gaps between current supply (including PEG programs) and demand. Each community also used this as an opportunity to engage other community partners, such as private foundations and institutions of higher education and further develop the community vision for universal prekindergarten. In Boston, the Mayor's Office and BPS have been working for the past few years on their own needs assessment and planning process. Mayor Walsh recently announced a commitment to universal prekindergarten and proposed a change in the use of Convention Center funds that would provide the city the necessary funds. Acknowledging that Boston does not have a problem of access, but one of quality, the planning team is developing a system for both expanding seats in the high-quality BPS program and continuing to build community-based programs' quality capacity.

EEC also continues to work closely with the state legislature as they discuss the feasibility of state funding for universal prekindergarten. EEC has reported to the legislature on both the findings of the year one evaluation of the PEG programs and the results of the strategic plans submitted as a result of the preschool planning grants. The continued planning grant funding in year two reflects the

legislature's commitment to this issue.

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.

In order to devote a maximum amount of funding on the implementation of PEG services, all sub-recipients in MA chose not to charge the first six months of their time to the grant. This time was spent in countless hours of planning meetings as each LEA and partnering ELPS met to decide on the design of PEG programming, leadership, governance, etc. Programs spent the summer and early fall outfitting space, hiring teachers, providing orientation to new staff and recruiting eligible families to enroll their children. Classrooms began opening in September 2015 and all were in operation by the end of October 2015. Not all were fully enrolled, however, by the end of the year. Comprehensive services were scheduled to start in December. Due to this roll out of in-kind planning, start up and implementation, each LEA had a significant portion of their grant funding carryover into year two. These carryover dollars supported continued implementation of the first year of programming through August of 2016 (MA PEG grantees provide a 12-month program cycle). As described in previous narrative sections, we anticipate the same liquidation method for future years of PEG. All year two funds have been allocated to support programming from September 1, 2016 through August 31, 2017. Slight changes in budgets were developed to roll small percentages of year one funds into the funding for this time period.

As of December 2016, all year two funds have been obligated. However, due to the program design and length of the program year, we do not expect liquidation until later in 2017 to cover all costs of implementation of year two of the program.

