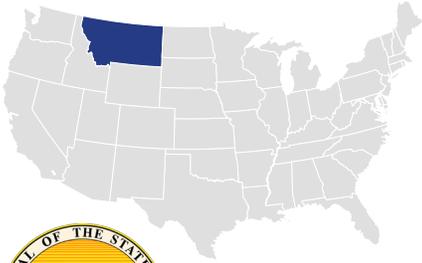


# PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

## Montana





# 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 #: S419A150015                      2. Grantee Federal Information Processing Code: 16

3. Project Title: Preschool Development Grant- Development

4. Grantee Name: Montana Office of Public Instruction

5. Grantee Address: 1227 11th Ave.

City: Helena                                      State: Montana                                      Zip: 59620

6. Project Director Name: Tara Ferriter-Smith

Title: Project Director

Phone #: (406) 444-0758                      Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_                      Fax #: (406) 444-3924

Email Address: tferriter@mt.gov

### Reporting Period Information

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

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

| Budget Period  | Federal Grant Funds | Non-Federal Funds (Match/Cost Share) |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Previous Budget Period  | \$10,000,000.00     | \$2,280,503.00                       |
| b. Current Budget Period   | \$10,208,034.00     | \$2,280,503.00                       |
| c. Entire Project Period<br>(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: 01/01/2016                      To: 06/30/2017
- 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: MT

PR/Award #: S419A150015

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

The State Team collaboratively utilized year-two funding of the federal Preschool Development Grant to support four-year-old children from families whose income is at or below two hundred percent of the federal poverty line to gain access to high-quality preschool education. Grant funds were distributed to eighteen subgrantees, located in forty-six high-needs communities, including eight Indian Reservations across Montana. Efforts to build, develop, and expand preschool programs so that low-and moderate-income families enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life resulted in hundreds of young Montana children obtaining first-rate preschool instruction and over seventy preschools improving their instruction through professional development and trainings. Additional grant funds made it possible for one hundred fifty-two preschool professionals to make strides in obtaining their Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, or P-3 Endorsement which furthered the professionalization of the early childhood education workforce in Montana. Montana successfully implemented grant funding and advanced its goal of providing high-quality preschool services that will impact an estimated six thousand preschool children over the four years of the grant.

Montana is now in Year Two of implementation of the MPDG and continues to build on their success from the Year One of implementation, draw on and learn from the lessons of that year, and identify and reduce barriers to successful implementation with the goal that Montana can continue providing high-quality preschool services to the most vulnerable children in the state so that they have a greater opportunity to be successful in school and life.

To achieve that aim, the Montana Preschool Development Grant set forth the following goals:

- Expand the number and percentage of children served in preschool programs across the state.
- Expand the number and percentage of eligible children in high-needs communities served by high-quality preschool programs who are ready for kindergarten, as determined by a valid and reliable assessment for kindergarten readiness.
- Develop and implement a kindergarten entry assessment system for participating children by the end of Year 3 of the Preschool Development Grant.
- Support targeted early learning programs and gather data about the structural elements of high-quality preschool programs, as identified in the Montana Preschool Program Standards.

Montana has experienced success in the pursuit of these goals seeing an increase in all areas from Year One, however challenges have also been faced. Both these successes and challenges are discussed below.

In Year Two, Montana increased the number of children served across the state, including those in high-needs communities. This was achieved through the addition of six additional subgrantee programs which increased the number of implementing classrooms from 27 to 57, increasing the capacity to serve more children. Overall, this increased the enrollment of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs by 65% from 462 children in the 2015 -2016 school year to 763 children in the 2016-2017 school year. In addition to reaching more Eligible Children, the cost per child fell from an average of \$14,069 in 2015-2016 to an average of \$5,065 in 2016-2017. In year one the cost per child ranged from about \$2,500 to \$64,000 and was significantly higher in school district programs who did not have an existing preschool program in place and had to purchase full

classrooms and playground equipment in their start-up year. In year 2 the cost per child ranged from \$1,881 to \$14,356 with an average cost of \$5,065. This average is much lower because most programs purchased new classroom supplies and materials in year 1 and didn't need as much funding in year 2. Head Start programs were able to use PDG funding to supplement the cost of implementation to cover the higher teacher salary, longer school day, and longer school year which limited their cost per child for PDG funding. School districts had a higher cost per child as they do not have as many resources available to them so they are relying more on PDG funding.

The state collected important data to determine professional development needs across the project. CLASS, ECERS, and DIAL assessments. These assessments capture the different components of an early childhood classroom. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) focuses quality of interactions between child and teacher. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS) focuses on the structure and quality of an early childhood classroom. And the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL) is a screening tool used to identify young children who are need of intervention.

- CLASS - Classroom Assessment Scoring System: MPDG classroom scored in the High-Quality range in emotional support area. The average MPDG CLASS score was above the national Head Start average.
- ECERS: MPDG classrooms obtained High-Quality scores on the interactions, and language and reasoning sections.
- DIAL: From fall to spring, growth was measured in almost all DIAL areas with language being the largest area of growth.

American Indian children experienced pronounced, accelerated growth on the DIAL assessments with an increase of 14 points from fall to spring assessments. While further assessments will be needed to continue to monitor this growth and the effect of the MPDG on school readiness, these early returns are promising and show great potential for good outcomes for spring testing this year.

Montana also has great success in serving children who are eligible for special education services. 13% of Eligible Children served by MPDG programs qualify for special education services. This percentage is well above the Montana and national averages. Programs have embraced their role and responsibility in serving those Eligible four year olds.

Collaborative efforts within communities can be credited for helping to increase the number of Eligible Children served and Montana is in the process of developing a kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) set to pilot in fall of 2017.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction worked with internal partners to determine a plan for including MPDG children in the statewide longitudinal data system. This included not only clearing data governance hurdles internally, but working with MPDG programs to correctly enter, edit, and report information into the system. While the logistics of employing the data system were significant, the benefits will be far reaching. Outcomes of the MPDG program can be monitored and assessed in the years to come.

The State of Montana has a few topics that remain challenges as well as lessons learned. One lesson learned was that in order to serve all eligible four year old children in high quality full day classrooms subgrantees would have to problem solve ways to find space for all of their classrooms making all half day classrooms into full day classrooms. In order to meet health and safety standards subgrantees have also had to remodel space to accommodate young children which can also be costly. Some programs found schools and churches to rent space from while others have gotten creative with mobile classrooms and even pooling funding sources to build new buildings. Another lesson learned is that classroom start-up costs for a new program were much greater than we anticipated and teacher salary matrices vary greatly from community to community so the cost per child has been greater than we anticipated it would be. Recruiting and retaining teachers with the appropriate credentials has also been a challenge for many of our high poverty, high needs communities, especially our Indian Reservations. This remains a challenge that the State is supporting through ongoing leadership support. We have also realized that programs are resistant to identifying children that should be identified as English Language learners. Programs identified being resistant because they either felt like either the identification process was arduous or didn't understand what the benefit of identification would be for themselves or the LEA's. We are providing targeted support to broaden the understanding of ELL definition and increase knowledge around language of impact, working with Title 1 to align to K-12 process as well as helping subgrantees identify students in the AIM system so students are flagged to be screened by the WAPT in

kindergarten.

Year One of the MPDG has offered the State team great insight into what can be achieved with further funding. Significant strides were made in achieving each of Montana's four main goals for grant funding. The number and percentage of children served in state preschool programs was increased, the number and percentage of eligible children served by high-quality preschool programs in high-needs communities was expanded, progress was made in developing and implementing a kindergarten entry assessment system, and data was gathered regarding the implementation of structural elements of high-quality preschool programs as identified in Montana Preschool Program Standards. Additionally, critical lessons for grant-funded years two, three, and four were learned and changes to ensure future success are already taking place. Most importantly, due to grant funding, Montana is building, developing, and expanding state preschool programs so that low-and moderate-income children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.

Montana's grant projected the number of slots for year one to be 1,138 and 1,613 slots in year two. Although we didn't achieve these, Montana did increase slots for Year Two. Montana increased the number of children served across the state, including those in high-needs communities. This was achieved through the addition of six additional subgrantee programs which increased the number of implementing classrooms from 27 to 57, increasing the capacity to serve more children. Overall, this increased the enrollment of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs by 65% from 462 children in the 2015 -2016 school year to 763 children in the 2016-2017 school year.



**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: MT PR/Award #: S419A150015

**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.

The Montana (MT) Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Implementation Team provided multiple types of support to subgrantees increasing enrollment of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs by 301 children (65%). The State PDG Team implemented the activities outlined in the Montana Preschool Development Grant providing support for 57 classrooms implementing the components of a High-Quality classroom for twenty subgrantees.

During the 2015-2016 school year, twelve subgrantees participated in PDG implementing High Quality criteria in 27 classrooms. In addition 16 classrooms received supports in developing infrastructure to be able to implement the standards of High-Quality for the 2016-2017 school year. During the 2016-2017 school year the MT PDG added six additional subgrantees who are implementing the components of a High-Quality Preschool Program in 57 classrooms. Although the state did not meet the targeted number of 1,613 in year 2 the eighteen subgrantees were able to provide High-Quality services to 763 children which is an increase of 65% from the 462 children who received services in High-Quality classrooms during the 2015-2016 school year.

| Implementation Year | Target | # of Subgrantees | # of Classrooms | Eligible Children Served |
|---------------------|--------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 2015-2016           | 1,138  | 12               | 27              | 462                      |
| 2016-2017           | 1,613  | 18               | 57              | 763                      |

This increase can be attributed to the work that was done in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 to help guide programs in understanding and implementing the components of High-Quality Programs as outlined in the Montana Preschool Program Standards. Programs also received targeted support and action planning through a continuous improvement process, on-site support, and targeted Professional Development.

School District and Head Start Programs were each assigned a team of three specialists to provide direct support to programs. One specialist is assigned to support the development of program-wide infrastructure, building of systemic data collection, and action planning targeted at the development of their Program Leadership Team. These measures ensure continuous improvement by providing information to problem solve ways to implement the components of a High-Quality program in as many classrooms as possible. A second specialist provides support to staff and leadership with family engagement and community outreach to ensure the delivery of developmentally appropriate, linguistically responsive, accessibility of Comprehensive Services for children, and evidence-based health and safety standards. A third support person provides direct support to classroom staff to support developmentally appropriate instruction, effective delivery of evidence-based curricula, as well as strategies for using ongoing formative assessment data to provide individualized supports and accommodations so all children could fully participate in learning opportunities.

All program staff received high quality professional development delivered through a variety of approaches. PDG staff from all Programs attended a Summer Institute in both July of 2015 and July of 2016 to learn about

the implementation of the High-Quality components of the Montana Preschool Program Standards. The first two days of the Summer Institute were targeted towards specific program needs. The MPDG Implementation team worked with the subgrantee programs and their support specialists to identify those needs. The professional development opportunities offered at the Summer Institute were informed by those needs and participants were assigned to sessions accordingly. The final two days of the Institute were offered in a typical conference format in which individuals could select which session they would like to attend based on their individual needs. In addition to Summer Institute and the on-site job-embedded support provided by the specialists assigned to their program, subgrantees also received targeted professional development through site-based and regional trainings. These professional development opportunities included workshops and training for Conscious Discipline, coaching, The Pyramid Model, early literacy skills, and leadership.

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.*

Currently, 4.6% of Montana's four year-old children receive special education services through IDEA Part B, Section 619. As this number is less than the national average of 6.4%, Montana has set the national number as it's target. Pursuing this target involved communicating with the programs their role and responsibility in serving those Eligible four year-old children, providing professional development opportunities for MPDG program staff, and coordinating with the local EC coalitions to support those MPDG programs and their families. Through these efforts currently 13.0% of income eligible children in MPDG classrooms are identified for special education services.

In recruiting programs in high needs communities to participate in the MPDG, the State Implementation Team communicated the need to serve those children eligible for services under IDEA in their High-Quality classrooms. Programs made their commitment to this goal by agreeing to the statement of work within the memorandum of understanding. Subgrantees agreed to address the needs of Eligible Children who may be in need of additional supports, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays, children who are English Learners, children who reside on Indian Lands, children who are homeless, children who are involved in the child welfare system, and children who are from military families.

The State Implementation Team provided support to staff with full inclusion of Eligible Children with disabilities in participating High-Quality Preschool Programs by providing opportunities for ongoing professional learning. At the annual Summer Institute, several training sessions aimed at supporting students with disabilities were offered. All instructional program staff and Program Leadership Team members were required to attend the Summer Institute. Programs also received 5-8 days, depending on number of classrooms, of on-site support each month from their assigned State Implementation Team Members, which included learning about optimizing cost measures, engagement and support for families of Eligible Children with Disabilities, offering comprehensive services, age-appropriate facilitates that are designed to meet the needs of Eligible Children with Disabilities, sharing of data consistent with federal and state law, and utilizing community based resources.

Montana has 19 local early childhood coalitions that are receiving infrastructure support from the PDG grant. These coalitions are supporting the work of preschool in multiple ways. One significant element of support provided by many of the coalitions is their active participation in community child find activities, screenings and assessments for school readiness. Often these interactions are the first steps in connecting services with families of children with disabilities or special needs. The community coalition meetings bring a large group of Early Childhood stakeholders together on a monthly basis to coordinate services to families as well as making sure that the community resources are promoted, available and up to date for families to use when needed. Among a few of the members that participate in the meetings are county health departments, home visiting programs, part C providers, mental health providers and school personnel. Each of these entities plays an

important role in providing comprehensive services to children with disabilities.

In addition to the above stated members, each of the sub-grantees are required to have their Family Engagement Coordinator participate in the coalitions' meetings. By actively attending these meetings, Family Engagement Coordinators are able to support a more robust and comprehensive service plan in their programs, focusing on nutrition, health screenings and social emotional, among others.

Specialists from the Department of Health and Human Services support the development of the work of the Family Engagement Coordinator as well as the coalitions in their area. Each of these specialists are working to ensure the sub-grantees have comprehensive child health services as an integral part of their family engagement plans. In addition, they are charged with developing a transition plan for children moving from preschool and/or childcare to their kindergarten setting. These transition services are vital for the children and families to have a successful transition and school experience.

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

MT PDG subgrantees provided High-Quality educational programming to 763 children in the 2016-2017 school year which is a 65% increase from the 2015-2016 school year. One of the most influential factors that contributed to the success of the increase in children served was the adoption of the Montana Preschool Program Standards by the Board of Public Education. These standards went into effect July 1, 2015 holding Preschool Programs to a high quality standard that reflect best practices. Schools and Head Start Programs have had time to learn about the new standards and develop action steps toward full implementation of the standards. The MT PDG State Implementation Team has also provided targeted support and professional development to support subgrantees with continuous improvement and action planning to implement those standards that they were not implementing last year to ensure High Quality implementation.

The Board of Public Education also adopted new preschool teacher education and licensure requirements, found in Chapter 57 of the Administrative Rule, which includes educator licensure rules that govern the types of licenses and endorsements available and how teachers can apply for and renew their licenses. The Board of Public Education also adopted new Educator Preparation Program Standards found in Chapter 58 of the Administrative Rule of Montana. These standards are used by institutions of higher education to prepare early childhood educators and design early childhood programs of study; assess student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and determine an early childhood higher education program's effectiveness. Both went into effect July 1, 2015. Part of the infrastructure building for the state of Montana was to offer personnel within the High Needs Communities the opportunity to apply for financial assistance to attain a P-3 endorsement based on these new rules. One hundred and fifty two people within identified High-Needs Communities received financial assistance in the fall of 2016 through the PDG grant to increase the skill level and quality of the Early Childhood workforce in these communities.

The State Team conducted desk audits and on-site monitoring for Cohort I programs in the spring of 2016 to better understand the depth of implementation of these High-Quality standards and to ensure compliance Montana Preschool Program Standards. All Program Leadership Teams utilize the Self-Assessment tool that outlines key subcomponents of the MT Preschool Program Standards to gauge their implementation of the Program Standards as part of an ongoing continuous improvement process. The State Implementation Team members who are on-site 5-8 days each month utilize this information combined with student outcome measures, Measures of Environmental Quality (ECERS), and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions (CLASS), and formative assessment data for children's skill development to guide decision making through an ongoing continuous improvement action planning process.

LEA's and Head Start Programs were provided information about the benefits of being a part of the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Program and were encouraged to enroll.

**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.

Montana does not currently have state funding available for preschool. School District and Head Start Programs use a combination of federal funding sources such as Head Start, Title I, Impact Aid, Special Education as well as General Funds to provide educational services to preschool-aged children and families in their communities. In FY 2015 1,620 three to five year old children were receiving special education services of which 578 were four year old children. In FY 2016 1,592 three to five year old children were receiving special education services of which 533 were four year old children.

One example of the State's commitment to early education is the investment in The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. This voluntary, tiered quality improvement system outlines achievable criteria that early childhood programs can attain to improve the quality of their educational, support services. The State Legislature has also identified performance based, 'one-time only' funds to be given to qualifying early childhood programs. Currently 252 programs are involved in STARS to Quality providing quality care to up to

8000 young children.

To improve the quality of educators in Montana's preschool programs, on July 1, 2015, the Board of Public Education adopted two new Administrative Rules, found in Chapter 57 and 58 respectively. The first rule outlined preschool teacher education and licensure requirements, governing the types of licenses and endorsements available and how preschool teachers can apply for and renew their licenses. The second, outlines standards used by institutions of higher education to better prepare early childhood educators. The standards guide the design of effective early childhood programs of study. They help to assess student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions and lastly, help early childhood higher education program's evaluate their own effectiveness. To increase the number of highly qualified preschool teachers in the state the MPDG Financial Assistance Opportunities for Career Advancement program has provided assistance to 152 individuals from identified High-Needs Communities. Enrolled students are working towards three outcomes, a Bachelor's degree, a Masters degree or the P-3 Endorsement. The number receiving assistance in 2016 has increased by 98 students from the previous fall.

The state is further building capacity for state slots through the Governor's Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC), which is an advisory board to the Governor on issues related to early childhood. One goal of this advisory group is to improve collaboration and coordination across the spectrum of governmental and nonprofit organizations providing early childhood services. The BBAC focuses on the multiple systems that impact young children and families, which include, early childhood programs, physical and mental health services, family support, and parent education. The stakeholders in the BBAC represent these organizations and many others from around the state.

Springing from the BBAC, the local Best Beginnings Coalitions have been created to support community efforts. Ten of the twenty coalitions are located in targeted High-Need Communities. Two subgrantees are currently investigating the process to begin community coalitions. Each coalition tasks itself with rallying local community members around early childhood issues, but their presence has also facilitated system building capacity and service delivery. For example, early childhood home visiting services have been established in one coalition community. Local Best Beginnings Coalitions are instrumental in collaborating with Subgrantees in High-Need Communities to ensure eligible children have the services and supports to attain the essential kindergarten readiness skills outlined in the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS). The MPDG and a National Governor's Association grant worked in collaboration, guided by state leadership to develop a document titled, The Montana Early Learning Roadmap: A Community Framework. This document describes how local school districts, preschool providers, Head Starts, social service agencies and families have come together to expand early learning opportunities. The sustainability of the coalitions will be paramount in moving preschool efforts forward in Montana.

All local coalitions conducted Community Needs Assessment in December of 2015. The information was utilized to identify if there were eligible children in their communities who were not receiving services in a High Quality Preschool Program. Based on the individual community results, coalitions modified their 2016 strategic plan to coordinate with stakeholders in identifying and placing eligible children. Coalitions will conduct another Community Needs Assessment in early 2017 with the same goal.

Collaborative, community efforts were very successful in increasing the number of eligible children being served in many subgrantee programs. Community members, MPDG leadership, local coalitions, and subgrantees have worked together to accurately identify a communities potential number of eligible children and have made targeted efforts to place them. In some communities, media messages were created to air on the radio, community developed banners were displayed at early childhood events, and local newspaper ads were written all directed at reaching eligible children. In addition to these individual efforts, each community received reproducible promotional flyers specific to their program and community. The media outreach was focused on the benefits and importance of high quality early education on brain development. Because these approaches have been so successful, we plan to continue and expand these efforts to locate and place eligible children.

**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.

A work group of early childhood stakeholders from the Governor's BBAC advisory group determined that the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning™, Fourth Edition (DIAL™-4) global screener for assessing children's skill levels was a valid and reliable means of determining school readiness that assesses all five of the Essential Domains of School Readiness including language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development. DIAL-4 provides standard deviation and percentile cutoff points by chronological age at two-month intervals for total and area scores --Motor, Concepts, Language, Self-Help, and Social Development. Percentile ranks and standard scores also are provided.

An assessment team has been hired by the State to administer the DIAL-4 assessment in the spring of the preschool year to determine children's readiness for Kindergarten in the fall. Many of the children in our preschool programs disperse to many different schools after preschool so the stakeholder group agreed that we would gather readiness data on children while they were still enrolled in a PDG program as it may be difficult to find them all after they have moved to a new setting for Kindergarten. Assessment team members have received training in administering the assessment in a standardized way and a Lead Assessor are on-site to oversee the administration of the tool to ensure valid and reliable test results. It is the goal of the State PDG

Team to utilize the assessment team to provide on-site support to program level staff in years 3 and 4 of the grant in administering the assessment so that programs can learn to implement the tool in a reliable way to sustain this practice after the life of the PDG.

The DIAL-4 is not a state mandated assessment tool. PDG programs are required to participate in the assessment with those classrooms that are implementing High Quality, PDG programs participated in the spring of 2015 and will be participating again in the spring of 2016.

The assessment components of the DIAL tool align with the Preschool Development Grant's five Essential Domains of School Readiness outlined in the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) (language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and emotional and social development).

**Alignment of Essential Domains of School Readiness, MELS, and DIAL**

| <b>Essential Domains of School Readiness</b>     | <b>MELS</b>                 | <b>DIAL performance area</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Language and literacy</b>                     | <b>Communication</b>        | <b>Language</b>              |
| <b>Cognition and general knowledge</b>           | <b>Cognition</b>            | <b>Concepts</b>              |
| <b>Approaches towards learning</b>               | <b>Cognition</b>            | <b>Concepts</b>              |
| <b>Physical well-being and motor development</b> | <b>Physical</b>             | <b>Motor</b>                 |
| <b>Emotional and social development</b>          | <b>Emotional and Social</b> | <b>Behavior</b>              |

Kindergarten Readiness was determined through the DIAL-4 assessment tool. DIAL is a screening tool used to identify those children in the early years who are in need of diagnostic assessment or intervention. The assessment includes performance areas that align with the PDG prescribed Essential Domains of School Readiness. These performance areas each include seven tasks. Scores from the tasks in each subscale are added to obtain a total score for each performance area, and those performance area scores are added to determine a child's DIAL total score. This score is converted to an age-based percentile rank based on a national normative sample. This percentile ranking is used to identify those children with potential delays.

The MPDG State Team, with recommendations from early childhood stakeholders and following the guidelines established in the DIAL-4 manual, set the cutoff score at the 16th percentile. This level classifies approximately 16% of the DIAL-4 national normative sample group into the Potential Delay category. Those scoring in the 16th percentile represent one standard deviation below the mean DIAL total score. For GPRA 1(c) in the attached data worksheet we've provided information from the screening conducted in the spring of the 2015-2016 school year. Column C Total is number of eligible children enrolled in the 2016-2017 school year. Column D Total is based on a sampling of eligible children tested in the 2015-2016 school year. In the spring of 2016 we tested 488 children, 283 (58%) of which were Kindergarten Ready in the spring of 2016.

The MPDG serves many children in high-needs communities. These children are more likely to experience academic struggles than their counterparts in other communities. In determining the cutoff value, stakeholders and the MPDG State Team sought to identify children who are at risk of failing in an academic setting. In identifying them through the DIAL screening, they can then be further assessed and, if needed, intervention steps can begin.

During the first year of implementation (2015-2016) we elected to administer the DIAL screener in the fall and in the spring to see if it was valuable to get pre and post test results. In fall 2015 and spring 2016, DIAL assessments of children in High Quality classrooms were conducted. Fall to spring saw a growth of 12 percentile points in the DIAL total score (+15 points in the language area, +8 in motor, and +6 in concepts). Based on this sampling of children that included matched data this raised the mean DIAL total score from the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile in fall to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in the spring. The percentiles referenced are those identified through a national normative average.

A closer look at a sampling of Montana's largest subgroups, American Indian children and children with disabilities, shows significant gains for the former, but not the latter. American Indian children experienced a 14 percentile point increase from fall to spring. In fall, they averaged a DIAL total score in the 26<sup>th</sup> percentile. During the spring assessment, this score pushed them up to the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile (+11 in concepts, +10 in the language area, and +7 in motor). Children eligible for special education services were the least likely to experience growth and continued normal development, going from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> percentiles in the DIAL total score (+5 in the language area, +3 in motor, and +0 in concepts).

The DIAL-4 assessments will continue to provide the MPDG implementation team and the subgrantee programs valuable data on the school readiness of the children they serve. The MPDG Implementation Team will conduct DIAL-4 assessments in spring of 2017 and in spring of 2018 to be able to compare spring to spring data within each community and overall across the project. After the life of the MPDG, the responsibility of assessment will be up to the local districts and Head Start Programs.

In the fall of 2017, Montana will launch their Kindergarten Transition Plan, which includes suggestions similar to those required by the grant as part of the development of a KEA system. Our assessment stakeholder group recognized that more guidance was needed for families, communities, early learning providers, and schools as they collaborate to ensure that children attain essential readiness skills and that a cohesive community effort is needed to support children and families in the important transition from preschool to Kindergarten. This document will provide guidance to communities as they design systems for supporting the transition to kindergarten from a variety of early learning settings. It will include ideas and strategies for coordination of community resources, a list of key skills in each of the five domains and a menu of assessments that can be used in a preschool or Kindergarten setting that could be used to measure the acquisitions of these skills. Assessment tools will be suggested by the state, but Montana does not prescribe the use of any one tool. This tool defines "school readiness" as "a child's readiness to have sustained successful learning experiences that can be achieved when families, communities, early learning programs, and schools support readiness. This is achieved by providing experiences and rich environments which increase the child's development in emotional/social, physical, communication and cognitive skills. These early experiences set the foundation for the child's successful future growth and development."

**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.**

The State uses the Montana Preschool Development Grant (MPDG) to identify and share best practices and program strengths as well as identify areas for ongoing program improvement through an integrated process of on-site and virtual monitoring. The monitoring process is designed to facilitate communication and information exchange that will assist programs with improving program quality, improving program linkages with state standards, incorporating best practices, and determining the quality of the PDG programs.

Subgrantees agree to collaborate with the State Implementation Team through monthly on-site visits. These visits enable staff to monitor grant activities and provide ongoing professional development and support facilitating program leadership team meetings ensuring grant requirements and program improvement goals are developed. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agenda's, updated Program Specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents.

A State monitoring team also has access to all site visit agendas and site visit summary documents for the purpose of desk audit reviews. Additionally state implementation team members regularly debrief with grant managers to provide updates and monitor progress.

As the lead agency for this grant, the OPI holds primary responsibility for the oversight of grant implementation activities. In order to accomplish this the OPI has the following processes set up:

1. Advise all sub recipients of grant requirements including: federal regulations, contract agreements, and state requirements.
2. Conduct monthly site visits to monitor program involvement and progress, provide technical assistance and support, and establish plans for improvement using the continuous improvement cycle. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agenda's, updated Program Specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents.
3. Conduct a desk audit of all sub grantee programs. Data to be reviewed during desk audit includes APR survey, monthly summary documentation, and budget information.
4. Perform an onsite Monitoring visit for any sub grantee that shows deficiencies as indicated by monthly visits and the results of the desk audit.
5. Monitor the activities of all sub recipients 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. Monitoring also ensures performance goals are achieved. This monitoring plan is aligned with all OPI standard operating procedures for programmatic and fiscal monitoring.

Areas identified for corrective action through the desk audit or on-site monitoring are addressed with the program leadership through a corrective action plan. The corrective action plan clearly identifies the item(s) that must be resolved, the demonstrable goals, staff responsible, and timelines. Areas for improvement may be incorporated into the program-wide continuous improvement cycle.

The roadmap for all School District and Head Start Programs in the state are the Montana Preschool Program Standards. All Program staff participate in an electronic Self-Assessment which is used to guide Program Leadership Teams (PLT's) in implementing the Montana Preschool Program Standards, which meets or exceeds the grants definition of High-Quality Preschool Program with the exception of the requirement for a full-day program. However, programs are aware that as a grant participant they are required to provide a school day that is equivalent to a full day at the public elementary school in the State and operate not fewer than five hours a day. The Self-Assessment tool outlines the important components of the Montana Preschool Program Standards as well as sub-components. The eight essential components include 1) Leadership and Administration 2) Early Learning Content Standards 3) Curriculum 4) Assessment 5) Instruction 6) Physical Learning Environments 7) Child Guidance 8) Family and Community Engagement. The State Implementation Team members who are on-site 5-8 days each month utilize the information from the Self-Assessment tool

combined with student outcome measures, Measures of Environmental Quality, and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions to guide decision making through an ongoing continuous improvement action planning process.

Programs completed a program survey and enrolled students into the statewide longitudinal data system to inform the State about the quality of their program. This information will be utilized as part of the desk audit. Using the desk audits and the monthly on-site visit summaries, the State collects information from each program about program start and end dates, daily start and end times, maximum class size, staff demographics and level of education, how programs use data as a part of a continuous improvement cycle, ways in which the program provides professional development, how programs include students with disabilities, what accommodations they provide, and how they coordinate services with school districts. The Programs also provide information about enrollment, student recruitment barriers, comprehensive services provided, health and safety standards, and transportation for students to and from programs. They also provide information about what formative assessment tools are currently being utilized to gather the required Comprehensive Assessment data and how they are utilizing that data to inform continuous improvement for their program, for their teachers, and to ensure children are learning targeted readiness skills. The State is utilizing this data to determine next steps for State support and professional development and to refine grant expectations. The State will also utilize this information to inform future state policy.

Each subgrantee is required to employ a family engagement coordinator or an identified person within their system to provide support for families and link them to community resources. Most of the High Needs Communities within this grant have put together local coalitions that work collaboratively with the PDG schools and Head Start Programs to provide community level support and linkages to other early learning programs and resources. These coalitions are made of mental health professionals, school administrators, teachers, public health, local business partners, law enforcement, parents and family engagement coordinators. Having a wide group of stakeholders builds the interest of community members and leaders on the importance of preschool for young children.

## 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.*

To improve the quality of State Preschool Programs, Montana has allocated about 30 percent of PDG funding for infrastructure supports and utilized about 70 percent of the PDG funding for investment in the structural elements of quality. The state engaged many strategies to build statewide infrastructure to improve quality. There are new requirements for preschool teachers in MT, so the State has provided financial assistance to 152 teachers to attend college and earn their P-3 endorsement, increasing the number of qualified teachers. Five state personnel are employed and dedicated to conducting infrastructure building activities. These activities include monitoring and evaluating subgrantee activities, incorporation of Head Start programs into the state's longitudinal data system, implementation of grant requirements including the coordination of national and statewide stakeholders, communication with the project officer and technical assistance providers, planning of meetings for statewide stakeholders, planning of meetings and trainings for subgrantees, and interagency collaboration.

About twelve percent of the that subgrantees receive supports programs in developing the infrastructure of their entire program with the emphasis on adding more classrooms which are able to implement all of the structural elements of quality. In Montana we have encountered two barriers to implementing all the high quality elements. The first is space for full day programs. Many of our programs have traditionally provided a morning and an afternoon class in one classroom allowing them to provide services for twice as many children. Some classrooms have not converted to full day because the leadership team has not been able to find enough space to accommodate two classrooms. In addition, they have expressed concern that fewer children will receive services if they eliminate the afternoon class. The second challenge is finding teachers that meet the high quality standards with a Bachelor's degree. Some programs have been able to find teachers for some of their classrooms, but not all of them. All programs are working toward problem solving these barriers. They are using the ongoing continuous improvement process with the goal of providing all eligible four year olds in their communities with access to high quality educational services.

Programs are able to send staff from all of their classrooms to the annual Summer Institute and to other grant sponsored trainings to learn about the elements of quality, outlined in the Montana Program Standards. Programs have also been able to purchase classroom materials in all classrooms to ensure high quality.

During the 2016-2017 school year the State allocated 70 percent of the PDG funding for investment in the structural elements of quality. Eighteen subgrantees implemented the structural elements of quality in 57 classrooms, so eighty eight percent of the 6.5 million dollars provided directly to subgrantees supports classrooms implementing the elements of high quality. Comparatively, last year twelve subgrantees implemented High Quality elements in 27 classrooms so in just one years' time the State added six subgrantees, 30 classrooms, and 301 eligible children. We attribute this success to the infrastructure building that took place in year 1. We anticipate adding at least 3 more subgrantees and at least 8 additional classrooms in year 3. Each community had different obstacles as they began implementing all of the high quality indicators, however, they were able to increase the number of classrooms by identifying those

obstacles and taking steps to address them as part of the action planning procedure in the continuous improvement process in year one and in the summer before year 2 implementation began. They collaborated with the State Team members assigned to their program to identify a barrier-reducing goal to break it down into manageable action steps.

One of this year's biggest successes took a great deal of coordination and collaboration with our internal partners for data collection. Subgrantee programs are now able to enter all child demographics, including those from Head Start Programs, through the statewide longitudinal data system this year. This success will be sustained, and it will allow for smooth transition when public preschool becomes available for all Montana children.

## 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.

During this second year of grant implementation eighteen subgrantees implemented the structural elements of quality in 57 classrooms, so eighty eight percent of the 6.5 million dollars provided directly to subgrantees supports classrooms implementing the elements of high quality. Comparatively, last year twelve subgrantees implemented High Quality elements in 27 classrooms so in just one years' time the State added six subgrantees, 30 classrooms, and 301 eligible children. We anticipate adding at least 3 more subgrantees and at least 8 additional classrooms in year 3.

Leadership Teams worked diligently to recruit and maintain qualified teaching staff and teacher assistants with appropriate credentials. In addition, they took the time to understand the MT Preschool Program Standards and were intentional about planning, making sure they offered full day programs, kept child-to-instructional staff ratio no more than 10 to 1, and class sizes not larger than 20 while having at least one teacher with high staff qualifications. Administration used grant funding to increase instructional staff salaries ensuring they are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff in their communities. Leadership teams also purchased evidence based curricula in all classrooms and targeted implementation of evidence-based health and safety standards. Currently across the state, 13% of eligible children with disabilities are receiving services in PDG classrooms.

High-quality professional development is provided for all staff in a variety of ways. Program Leadership Teams attended two days of training in June to receive information about grant requirements, leadership, continuous improvement, and to receive support and guidance as they plan their next year budgets. All instructional program staff and Program Leadership Team members attended a four day Summer Institute in July of 2015 and 2016. Participants received information about grant requirements, attended sessions to begin developing shared knowledge regarding grant activities and best practices outlined in the Montana Preschool Program Standards. Programs also received 5-8 days of on-site support each month from their assigned State Implementation Team Members. The number of support days provided is dependent upon how many PDG classrooms they have. The OPI Team Member assigned to their program supported the development and refinement of a Program Leadership Team and continuous improvement processes. The DPHHS Team Member provided support and professional learning opportunities for the development of a family and community engagement plan, a social emotional framework, and implementation of health and safety standards. Instructional Consultants provided on-going job-embedded professional development for teachers in the classroom that included modelling of instruction, support with assessment data, and teacher goal setting and self-reflection. Staff received professional development about inclusion of children with disabilities, ensuring access to and having full participation in all opportunities that are developmentally appropriate, have culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence based curricula, with learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards. Teachers gained knowledge about strategies for providing individualized accommodations and supports so all children can access and participate fully in learning activities. Each subgrantee is required to hire a Family Engagement Coordinator to provide on-site support for children and families to in accessing Comprehensive Services for children in collaboration with community partners that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development.

Program Leadership Teams are responsible for monitoring the implementation of health and safety standards. The DPHHS State Team member assigned to the program provides monthly on-site support to PLT to ensure this is happening. The ECERS measure is used to provide feedback in the fall and spring of each year so that the PLT understand what actions it may need to take toward the implementation of a standard that is not being fully met.

The grant has had two major barriers to HQ. One of the barriers to having 100% of classrooms implement HQ is the requirement of BA'd teachers. High turnover plagues Montana but recruitment was refined, expanded and prioritized which has improved the recruitment of HQ teachers. Never the less, in a couple of our reservations programs the communities are small and the teachers have lived there their entire life and programs struggle losing the knowledge of the cultural component to replace it with a teacher with a BA. State staff is working to

find solutions so programs will be able to have the integrity of both culture and education. Space for classrooms is another barrier to the time requirement for HQ. Many programs had ½ day morning and ½ afternoon programs but this didn't meet the HQ standard of time. Some programs, over time and with support, have been able to locate additional classroom space to accommodate increased length of day without having to decrease the number of students they serve.

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

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

Subgrantees in the identified High Needs Communities were encouraged to provide slots in High Quality classrooms for as many eligible four year old children as they could find. Each community worked with the local Early Childhood coalitions to conduct surveys to try to find any children that may qualify that were not already enrolled. During the 2015-2016 school year subgrantees were able to provide slots for 462 of 1138 (41%) eligible children and that number was increased to 763 of 1613 (47%) eligible four year old children for the second school year, increasing the total number of children served by 301 children (65%). The grants target for year one was 1,138 slots and the goal for year two was 1,613 slots. There were a few factors that contributed to grant targets not being met. First, projections included 448 slots that would have been created by a state wide preschool bill that did not receive funding through the legislature. Second, when the grant writers were identifying their projections it was not understood that projected goal numbers would only be for classrooms that were implementing ALL of the high quality indicators. It was assumed that any classroom receiving support could be counted, even if they were in their infrastructure building year, so projected numbers included students that were receiving instruction in infrastructure building classrooms and as it turns out we were not able to count those children in the APR reporting. However if we did count those four year old children who were enrolled in grant classrooms there were a total of 989 children. Finally, grant writers were projecting numbers for classrooms envisioned to be filled with all eligible four year old children. When Programs learned that MT received the grant and details were finalized, it was determined that several programs found value or logistically needed to include three year old and/or five year old children or children who were not income eligible in their classrooms. Based on this feedback, Programs were given the option to use partial grant funding to pay for children who were eligible and needed to use other funding sources to pay for slots filled with children who were not eligible and 32 of 57 classrooms in 2015-2016 choose this option.

Despite not meeting these projected numbers the State is pleased with the increase in the number of students served in year 2. In fact, many Cohort III programs, originally projected as infrastructure building within year 2, were able to implement all of the high quality elements in classrooms ahead of schedule, allowing Montana to count these children. It is anticipated next year Montana will have three additional subgrantees implementing high quality elements in classrooms next year and at least eight additional classrooms will be added.

The state set a target of \$3,500 per slot. In Year Two, the cost per child fell from an average of \$14,069 in 2015-2016 to an average of \$5,065 in 2016-2017. In year one the cost per child ranged from about \$2,500 to \$64,000 and was significantly higher in school district programs who did not have an existing preschool program in place and had to purchase full classrooms and playground equipment in their start-up year. In year 2 the cost per child ranged from \$1,881 to \$14,356 with an average cost of \$5,065. This average is much lower because most programs purchased new classroom supplies and materials in year 1 and didn't need as much funding in year 2. Head Start programs were able to use PDG funding to supplement the cost of implementation to cover the higher teacher salary, longer school day, and longer school year which limited their cost per child for PDG funding. School districts had a higher cost per child as they do not have as many resources available to them so they are relying more on PDG funding.

Since MT does not currently have state funded preschool projections for the target amount of \$3,500 per slot was based on our work with Early Reading First and the Montana Striving Readers Project, for which the

average cost was \$4,000 per child. In addition, a survey by the Best Beginnings Advisory Council was also conducted with principals and superintendents across our State that said at least \$3,000 would be needed per child to fund High-Quality Preschool Programs. The State Implementation Team also gathered data from Subgrantees, which includes teacher qualifications and compensation, full day, class size/ratio, evidence-based professional development, and comprehensive services to help inform the calculation of the target cost per slot written into the grant. Other information that informed this process included research done by the Governor's office for the Governor's Early Edge Proposal, and average costs for Early Head Start and Head Start programs per slot. For the 2015-2016 school year subgrantees actual cost per slot ranged from \$2,286 to \$14,357 per child. We are pleased that we have been able to decrease the cost per slot in year two to \$5,065. One reason the average cost per child decreased is the State was able to provide better guidance to programs during the enrollment process allowing them to make some adjustments for their guidance to new and established MPDG classrooms. After learning from our year one implementation, the state was able to provide clarification regarding the difference between infrastructure support and high quality implementation to programs so in year two they were able to adjust which classrooms to support with MPDG dollars, increasing our student enrollment numbers while lowering the per cost slot. Year two also decreased because school district programs in year one who were starting new classrooms had to purchase all of their classroom furniture, materials and in some cases playground equipment, so had high start-up expenses. Existing classrooms, as many are in year two, had the majority of their materials and supplies resulting in lower cost per slot. An additional factor needing to be considered is the pay matrix for some school districts. In some communities the school district had a much higher salary schedule than other communities so programs needing to match that matrix to ensure they were meeting the high quality element, incurred a greater cost per child. We are pleased programs are complying with this high quality element but it is a factor to be considered when looking at individual slot costs per 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.

The key activities that strengthened partnerships with Subgrantees include ongoing professional development through the June PLT Meetings, the Summer Institute for PLT's and all instructional staff and on-site support from the State Implementation Team as they supported the continuous improvement processes and the development of PLT roles and procedures. Ongoing monitoring of Program progress is conducted during the State Implementation Team monthly site visits and a formal desk audit which occurs in early spring of each year. The monitoring process is designed to facilitate communication and information exchange that will assist programs with improving program quality, improving program linkages with state standards, incorporating best practices, and determining the quality of the PDG programs.

Subgrantees agree to collaborate with the State Implementation Team through monthly on-site visits. These visits enable staff to monitor grant activities and provide ongoing professional development and support facilitating program leadership team meetings ensuring grant requirements and program improvement goals are developed. Monthly site visit activities are documented through detailed Site Visit Agenda's, updated Program Specific Action Plans, and Site Visit Summary documents.

An external evaluator provides an in-depth analysis of the progress each year and provides a report to the State Leadership Team in the fall of each year. The state utilizes this information to identify next steps and actions for the project and to identify needs for specific programs.

The State Leadership Team meets quarterly with the Governor's BBAC to update state-wide stakeholders of grant activities and progress. The State Leadership Team meets monthly to monitor project level needs and progress. These conversations include ways for ensuring the delivery of High-Quality Preschool Programs to Eligible Children who may be in need of additional supports such as children with disabilities or developmental delays, English learners, children who reside in rural or tribal areas on "Indian lands", migrant children, homeless children, children in the welfare system, children from military families, and other children as identified by stakeholders. Information gathered by experts in these areas is communicated to the State Implementation Team to provide better support and relay the information to Program Leadership Teams. Identified experts in needed areas are invited to provide information at State Implementation Meetings and as presenters at Summer Institute.

The State Implementation Team met for two days each month this year to ensure common knowledge around grant expectations and discuss roles and responsibilities of the OPI and DPHHS team members. Refining the processes for on-site support for programs toward the coordination and delivery of plans related to assessments, data sharing, instructional tools, and family engagement were also priorities for these meetings. Early Childhood stakeholder work also happened to ensure the coordination of cross-sector and comprehensive services supported by Title I of ESEA, IDEA Parts B and C, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistant Act, the Head Start Act, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.

The community needs surveys conducted by the local coalitions were completed by subgrantees, early learning providers, parents and community stakeholders. We are gathering information about the collaboration currently happening in addition to identifying areas needing improvement. In addition, the survey is designed to gather information about the availability of high quality preschool and barriers to access that can be addressed to increase numbers of youth receiving preschool.

Subgrantees were required to minimize local administrative costs in their annual budget. If costs were high they had to amend the budget. When costs were shown to be minimized the budget was approved.

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

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

The State continues to make progress in multiple ways toward the plan to align High-Quality Preschool Programs supported by this grant with programs and systems that serve children from birth through third grade to improve transitions for children across the continuum. One key activity is to improve transitions for children across this continuum through partnerships with school district and Head Start programs. Programs included funding in their budget for inclusion of partnering district Principals and Kindergarten teachers in the annual Summer Institute and other professional learning opportunities offered in their region to support the development of High-Quality Preschool Programs.

Montana is in the process of developing a kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) as one of the key Preschool Development Grant activities. This plan, currently in draft form and set to pilot in fall of 2017, defines “school readiness” as “a child's readiness to have sustained successful learning experiences is achieved when families, communities, early learning programs, and schools support readiness. This is achieved by providing experiences and rich environments which increase the child's development in emotional/social, physical, communication and cognitive skills. These early experiences set the foundation for the child's successful future growth and development.”

Program Family Engagement plans include a plan for transition as well as supporting children and families from birth to age five and from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The development of the role of family engagement specialist along with determining professional development needs was a main focus of the work from September through January for program staff. Programs have developed plans for transition from Kindergarten to Grade 3 unique to their community that include strategies for collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers, expansion of access to full-day kindergarten, and increasing the percentage of children who are able to read and do math at grade level by the end of third grade. It will also include a plan for engaging parents and families of children moving from High-Quality Preschool Programs into the early elementary school years.

The State support team will be working with the family engagement coordinator in each community to continually fine tune the family engagement and transitions plans throughout the grant. Leadership teams are utilizing information collected from DIAL, formative assessment measures, CLASS, and ECERS to inform future decision making around the development of plans for ensuring alignment within a birth through third grade continuum. The State has also launched the longitudinal data system for preschool aged children that includes Head Start programs allowing for closer tracking of student demographics and history of enrollment in programs.

## 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*.

In Montana's grant proposal the total match for four years was \$16,788,000.

Matching funds - The overall State match: \$16,788,000

Year 1: \$4,197,000

Year 2: \$4,197,000

Year 3: \$4,197,000

Year 4: \$4,197,000

In our proposal under Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds, we identified 4 areas of support for matching funds. Three out of four of those areas are continuing to be committed to in the match. However, one of the areas did not come to fruition. During the 2015 legislative session, a bill was brought forward for voluntary preschool, called Early Edge Montana. It would have been open to all four-year-olds. The plan called for \$37 million over the next biennium. The match for the grant was \$1,497,000 per year, which would have provided block grants for our 16 high need communities identified in this grant. Unfortunately, the MT legislature did not allocate any money for this bill.

A budget amendment identifying three match categories that include AIM longitudinal data match of \$850,503 each year, STARS match of \$1,200,000 each year, and a Growth and Enhancement of Montana's Students (GEMS) match of \$230,000 each year for the first two years of the grant. The GEMS category was added to offset the legislative decision. This cost is part of the development of the longitudinal data system. Another bill for preschool funding has been drafted for the current legislative session for \$12,000,000. Should this bill pass we will be back on track for matching funds. If this bill does not pass we will have to identify other areas that may support preschool funding in Montana.

The amended match is \$16,788,000.

Matching funds - The overall State match: \$16,788,000

Year 1: \$2,280,503

Year 2: \$2,280,503

Year 3: \$6,113,497

Year 4: \$6,113,497

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

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

The State has followed its plan for the creation of a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade for a defined group of Eligible Children and their families within each High-Need Community served by each Subgrantee.

All participating Programs have hired a full time Family Engagement Coordinator that are responsible for integrating comprehensive high-quality supports and services to help create smooth transitions for children and families. Ensuring continuous and consistent high-quality early learning opportunities critical to children's success through transitions from one system to another and to coordinate services including home visiting, high-quality infant and toddler care, preschool programs, before-and-after-care services, and other family supports have been a priority. STARS is Montana's Quality Rating System. In support of the State Implementation Team encouraging and supporting leadership teams to take advantage of the STARS opportunity, many early childhood stakeholders have and continue to work on aligning requirements for childcare licensing, QRIS and Head Starts. The alignment process is a major success and will continue to improve over the next couple of years. The alignment work and the reworking of rules and regulations will support consistent high-quality early learning opportunities starting at birth. In addition to the alignment work, the state is making a more robust training and tracking system for early educator's workforce development which will raise the level of professional development and quality of early care providers and teachers.

Close collaboration between Subgrantees and the Best Beginnings Advisory Council and local Best Beginnings Coalitions has been in place in the majority of the High Needs Communities. The local Best Beginnings Coalitions are coordinating with Subgrantees to provide a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade, such as high-quality infant and toddler care, home visitation, attendance in state funded Full-Day kindergarten, and before- and after-care services, adult education, housing, health, and mental health services. The Best Beginning Advisory Council is the stakeholder foundation for many early care workgroups. Within the last year, two major workgroups have been developed out of this body of stakeholders and each of the workgroups support the alignment work. The creation of infant and toddler care work group as well as a Family Engagement workgroup are beginning efforts of state agencies combining resources and workforce energy to support and sustain this very important work. We foresee that over the course of the next two years we will see tremendous progress. Community Coalitions across the state provide oversight to Home Visiting grant recipients as well as collaborate on many early childhood services. Having coalitions that are active in a wide range of serves is key to bringing the work into one aligned system.

Expansion of the current Achievement in Montana (AIM) Statewide Longitudinal Data System to link preschool and elementary and secondary school data is currently launched this fall for all PDG Subgrantees and includes twelve Head Start Programs that have not been a part of the longitudinal data system in the past. The expansion of this system is tying the two early childhood and K-12 system together and we foresee this continuing to be a partnership that is beneficial to both parties moving forward.

Expansion of the alignment of child learning standards and expectations through the development of a crosswalk document of the MELS and the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for K-3 for use by early learning providers as they make informed instructional decisions that support one another. The resources developed with PDG funds creates sustainability that outlasts the grant. These resources are shared will all providers and is incredibly valuable.

Subgrantees have developed Family and Community Engagement Plans that will ensure access to resources, services, and outline activities that provide children and families with successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten. The State continues to support subgrantees in the sustainment of high levels of parent and family engagement as children move from High-Quality Preschool Programs into the early elementary school years through ongoing professional development to administration, leadership teams, and kindergarten

teachers is in place through monthly on-site visits from the State Implementation Team. Some of this work is new to our subgrantees. The development of these strategies and processes are slow but the State Implementation Team believes that when you are working to create system change and values that are sustainable, the work takes time. We have seen growth from the 15-16 school year to the current 16-17 year.

**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.

All of the State's federal grant award was utilized to create new State Preschool Program slots.

## Section B: Budget Information

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

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

Montana does not anticipate large discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Montana submitted a carryover request of \$7,850,500 of unobligated funds from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016. The carryover for OPI will be used to complete grant activities for the remainder of the 2016-2017 school year as outlined in the grant narrative rather than grant calendar year. We do not expect to have any unexpended funds at the end of the current budget period as we plan to spend all of year two funding by September 30, 2017.

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).

Montana does not anticipate any substantive changes to the State's approved budget in the upcoming fiscal year.

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.

All of the State's slots are new slots for preschool as there is currently no state funding for preschool. The State Team is working with Program Leadership team to think creatively to develop ways to sustain the progress they have made to continue to be able to provide access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the their communities. Communities are working collaboratively School District and Head Start programs pooling resources 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 blending funding sources that include federal Head Start funding, Title I, Special Education, Impact Aid, and General Funds.

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.

At this time we are not aware of any discrepancies between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. A large portion of the \$7,850,500 of unobligated funds from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 requested for carryover is money that programs had not yet spent. Final expenditure reports will be due on September 10, 2017.