

# Building a Stronger Early Childhood System:

## Ongoing State Efforts to Improve Coordination and Alignment

# INTRODUCTION

The need for a more coordinated and aligned early care and education (ECE) system is clear. The COVID-19 pandemic is shining a glaring spotlight on the fragility of the ECE market. The pandemic has also underscored the need for equitable access to ECE so that families can maintain stable employment and financial stability.

ECE programs and services have been historically administered and funded in silos. This lack of coordination presents challenges for families trying to access and navigate programs and services. It also presents challenges for programs in terms of administrative burden and operational stability.

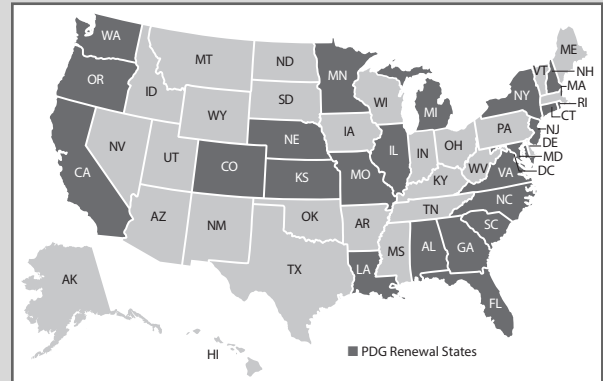
To address these challenges, the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program is providing \$275 million to states to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, coordination, and integration.<sup>1</sup> In FY 2019, PDG B-5 awards were made to 46 states and territories as part of an Initial Grant Award. The following year, six additional states and territories received an Initial Grant Award and 23 states received 3-year PDG B-5 Renewal Grants.

This brief provides an overview of how states are using PDG B-5 Renewal Grants to fund activities that help strengthen their ECE systems. The remaining sections are organized according to the following areas:

- Governance Changes
- Integrated Data Systems
- Coordinated Professional Development and Career Pathways
- Coordinated Service Provision
- Maximizing Communication with Families
- Coordinated Funding
- Improved Transitions

## Approach

Abt coders used qualitative analysis software (NVivo) to review the 2019 PDG B-5 renewal applications from 22 states.<sup>2</sup> A detailed codebook was developed to guide the analysis process, with the goal of identifying and categorizing planned state activities in each pre-identified focal area.



<sup>1</sup> The PDG B-5 grant program is co-administered by the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Early Learning in the U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Although 23 states received PDG B-5 renewal grants in 2019, this review focuses on 22 states; we were not able to access the renewal application from one state (Connecticut).

## GOVERNANCE CHANGES

### Why are states focused on governance changes?

ECE systems are focused on broad goals such as supporting parents and fostering young children's development. The ECE sector relies on a mixed delivery system that includes a combination of programs (e.g., Head Start, state-funded pre-kindergarten, family- and community-based programs) that depend on varied funding sources (e.g., federal and state governments, philanthropic entities, businesses). In many states, programs serving young children are spread across multiple agencies. PDG B-5 grants provide an opportunity for states to create a more aligned governance structure that spans these broad goals and funding sources.

### How are states approaching governance changes?

States vary considerably in how they plan to use PDG B-5 Renewal Grants to improve ECE governance. Some of the most common strategies are increasing interagency collaboration, creating or modifying governing boards or positions, establishing or improving local governance structures, increasing interagency data collaboration, developing or moving forward legislative initiatives, and rethinking the focus and organization of program, departments, or agencies.

Most state PDG B-5 plans include maintaining the same general agency structure and focusing on improved

### What is governance?

Governance refers to the laws, policies, processes, and structures used to allocate resources, ensure accountability, support collaboration across groups, and drive planning.<sup>3</sup> ECE governance structures are typically responsible for direct services for young children and parent/guardians, financial supports for families, workforce preparation and development, health and safety regulations, and policy development and implementation. State ECE governance structures vary significantly and are quickly evolving with the recognition that improved coordination is needed. Eighteen states have recently created consolidated governance structures to oversee multiple ECE components or programs.<sup>4</sup>

interagency collaboration. States are approaching collaboration in a variety of ways including the creation of official partnerships between agencies, cabinets or workgroups with membership from different agencies and community partners, and new positions at the gubernatorial, state, and/or local levels. Only one state explicitly referenced a plan to create a new department focused on early childhood as part of its PDG application.

### State Approaches for Improving ECE Governance

#### Improving interagency collaboration

- Expand membership of Early Childhood Council to be more inclusive of broader interests
- Create an interagency data governing body
- Designate a position within one state agency to lead collaboration efforts among all state agencies with relevant B-5 work
- Designate one state agency to lead collaboration efforts among all state agencies with relevant B-5 work
- Create an informal working group across state agencies and partners
- Establish new formal partnerships across state agencies

#### Reorganizing or changing governance structure

- Create a new department focused on supporting a comprehensive early childhood system
- Create governor-appointed position(s) focused on early childhood
- Form a special cabinet across state agencies to coordinate efforts and services
- Unify state, regional, and local quality and monitoring systems
- Consolidate programs and/or services
- Streamline advisory councils
- Create regional hubs to coordinate efforts



<sup>3</sup> Kagan, S. L., & Gomez, R. E. (Eds.). (2014). Early childhood governance: Choices and consequences. Teachers College Press.

<sup>4</sup> 50-State Comparison: Early Care and Education Governance by Education Commission of the States, <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-early-care-and-education-governance/>



## Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**California:** “California will take on the complex work of comprehensive ELC [Early Learning and Care] governance reforms to reduce fragmentation, unify quality, and ensure equity in programs and services across the geographically and demographically diverse state. Specifically, the PDG CT [Preschool Development Grant Core Team] will develop a detailed plan to modify CA’s current governance structure to align authority and oversight of ELC programs and services and create a single, unified system that coordinates ELC with home visiting, health and mental health services, nutrition, special education, and developmental screening to ensure CA’s investments support the whole child and family. The PDG CT will explore governance models that create alignment and equity across services with a singular focus on ensuring better outcomes for CA’s children and their families.”



**Rhode Island:** “Rhode Island hired a consultant specifically to support the development of a strong governance structure at the state level, with an emphasis on ensuring that family voices are regularly incorporated in our work. RI [Rhode Island] is in the process of implementing a B-5 governance structure to allow for agile, data-driven decisions that move the system towards our achievement of the child-level outcome goals and to provide clear leadership to successfully implement the activities proposed in this renewal grant.”



**Louisiana:** “Louisiana is working to create strong local governance models for the ECE system that are responsive to community needs and innovation in increasing access to quality ECE for children, birth to age five, from economically disadvantaged families. Since the initial PDG grant, LDOE [Louisiana Department of Education] has worked closely with RSNs [Ready Start Networks] to develop and scale local cross-sector/cross-program governance structures in each participating community. Each RSN is developing bylaws and establishing a governing board with decision-making authority to support the network’s blueprint as the RSN works to achieve its goals of increasing access and quality. Before becoming RSNs, these networks were charged with administrative tasks related to ECE in their communities. Now, with strong local governance and established bylaws, the RSNs have more authority to drive improvement at the local level. The first cohorts of RSNs will serve as models.”



## ■ INTEGRATED DATA SYSTEMS

### Why are states focused on data integration?

Data collection, data storage, and data interpretation is often siloed at the state level. Systems that interact with the same families and/or children can be housed across multiple departments and agencies. While no state can connect every data source, many states are making significant progress in linking and connecting key data systems. By coordinating information about children and families, states can better understand how and when families and children access services. This information can ultimately be used to improve efficiency, increase the quality of the services provided, and improve outcomes for service recipients.

### How are states approaching data integration?

The most common method of data integration referenced by PDG B-5 states is to develop plans for sharing data across agencies, departments, and programs. States are focused on connecting systems such as child care (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, subsidies), child welfare (e.g., abuse and neglect reports, services), behavioral health (e.g., mental health and substance use services), health (e.g., birth records, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and

### What is an integrated data system?

As technological advancements have emerged over the past several decades, the ability to collect and store information has also dramatically increased. With these advancements, states now collect troves of data that span systems such as education, child welfare, nutrition services, employment services, and health. An integrated data system involves connecting disparate data systems through one central system or linking multiple systems. This often necessitates different agencies sharing data with one another in new ways.

Children (WIC), Medicaid, home visiting, and education (e.g., school readiness assessments, services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)).

PDG B-5 states also commonly report plans to create and assign unique identifiers to develop a centralized/integrated data system. States also have plans to implement data-sharing agreements. Finally, some states also plan to use PDG B-5 funding to standardize assessment strategies and tools, such as screening and assessment tools for young children.


### State Approaches for Integrating Data

- Develop a centralized database and/or approach for linking data across systems
- Create and/or assigning unique identifiers to link data
- Develop data-sharing agreements
- Implement a coordinated, standardized strategy for assessment tools
- Address challenges to de-duplicating data
- Improve coordination and collaboration across research partners







## Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**Kansas** “We mapped ECCE [Early Childhood Care and Education] data systems and found extensive data coverage and infrastructure between four individual-level data systems... These systems collect sufficient identifying information to match participants and link systems. A review of infrastructure, other state Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) models, and our state agency governance suggests KS [Kansas] is best positioned for a federated model. The federated ECIDS model fits current capability and structure to ensure success and build the technical infrastructure to link and sustain systems. When established, we can derive unduplicated counts of a large percentage of children in our ECCE system with robust matching rules and a unique identifier governed by a data trust. ... In parallel, we will bring other ECCE systems (e.g., unsubsidized child care, privately funded home visiting, Early Head Start and Head Start) into the ECIDS matching/linking process based on proven business rules and technical requirements. Longer-term planning (years 3-6) will link ECCE, child welfare, Medicaid, juvenile justice, and behavioral health systems. Finally, an appointed KS ECIDS Core Team will lead the collaborative work.”



**Minnesota** “Overall, the development and use of the Portal will create better outcomes for MN [Minnesota] children and families and a better experience for families navigating assistance programs, improve efficiency and effectiveness of assistance programs, and enhance program integrity and data quality for research and evaluation. Data coordination and integration will help stakeholders hold state agencies and local government accountable for increasing equity and use of public funds. Aligning existing information systems provides critical information for local, regional, and state service delivery partners to coordinate and scaffold services that best meet a family’s and child’s needs, reducing gaps and loss of access during transitions, including transitions to kindergarten. Data sharing can also help agencies supervise public investments and understand how funds are being blended or braided in order to help the state identify programmatic inefficiencies and risks. This work is needed in order to produce an equitable and whole family centered service delivery system.”



**Colorado** “Fragmentation in the system includes the way in which CO [Colorado] tracks professional qualifications for ECE professionals. Currently, the system relies on either (or both) child care licensing standards and the Early Childhood Professional Credential to determine qualified individuals that can work with children in licensed ECE settings. Licensing, programs and professionals are all using disparate systems to track these qualifications. The proposed re-build of the PDIS [Professional Development Information System] will create a cohesive system that can be accessed by all three stakeholder groups as well as better align qualifications across systems. This is one example of OEC [Office of Early Childhood] investments in technology solutions that will reduce redundancy and allow for a more accurate, reliable, and valid method of collecting data to improve accountability.”



### Why are states focused on coordinated professional development and pathways?

States are developing more cohesive and robust professional development systems to improve the way they track professional qualifications, professional development offerings, and participation in these offerings. The goal of this work is to bolster supports for and stabilize the existing workforce. States are also developing or refining career pathways (sometimes referred to as ladders or lattices) to encourage the workforce to further their education and skills and advance in their careers.

### How are states coordinating professional development?

States are using PDG B-5 funds to integrate and expand professional development opportunities across different systems. For example, many states are expanding their offerings for joint professional learning opportunities across sectors. These sectors may include center-based child care teachers and staff, Head Start staff, home visitors, early intervention staff, public school preschool and teachers, and/or other professionals who serve young children. States are also expanding the content offered at professional learning sessions to cover domains such as special education, mental health, behavioral challenges, and trauma-informed practice.

### What is coordinated professional development and career pathways?

Coordinated professional development involves the integration, enhancement, and/or expansion of professional development opportunities and data systems, including but not limited to workforce registries. Career pathways initiatives for the ECE workforce often involves defining or refining the competencies and skills for different positions within the field. This can help the workforce better understand how to progress, develop, or move across different sectors. It can also strengthen alignment across credentialing systems so that the workforce can better leverage and build on their skills.

States are also focused on improving and/or consolidating professional development data systems to track workforce participation in professional development and/or workforce credentials across systems. For example, some states are developing systems to help the ECE workforce more easily identify relevant professional development opportunities. Other states are building or expanding workforce registries to track professional development and credentials. Some states are also using regional hubs to provide systems of coordinated professional development.

### State Approaches for Coordinating Professional Development and Credentialing

- Align coaching programs with higher education to pair the completion of coursework

#### Cross-system professional development

- Create opportunities for professional development that span multiple systems (e.g., Head Start staff, home visitors, child care providers, elementary teachers)
- Coordinate systems to ease children's transitions to kindergarten
- Streamline professional standards across settings and programs
- Share best practices across the early childhood workforce
- Broaden the scope of professional development to cover new topics
- Expand practice-based coaching
- Promote professional development for programs to implement evidence-based curriculum or interventions
- Hire staff to focus on the coordination of existing professional development offerings
- Expand professional development opportunities for

the workforce in rural areas through online and other strategies

#### Coordinating workforce data

- Develop systems to help the workforce find relevant professional development opportunities
- Build or expand early childhood workforce registry
- Use regional hubs to provide a coordinated system of professional development and data collection

#### Building career pathways

- Develop credentialing systems that provide clear advancement, align with diverse learning needs, and/or are aligned with other systems that support young children (e.g., early childhood, home visiting, K-12)
- Develop a competency framework or pathway to align provider credentials, certifications, and coursework
- Coordinate or partner with higher education systems to align and expand opportunities for credentials, certification, coursework, and other professional development opportunities



Finally, many PDG B-5 states are using PDG B-5 funds to develop or refine career pathways for the workforce. Some states are developing new credentialing systems to provide clear advancement opportunities that align with the diverse learning needs of adult learners. Some of these systems are aligned with other systems that support young children (e.g., early childhood, home visiting, K-12) to build a more cohesive

system. Some states are aligning their credentialing systems by building partnerships with institutions of higher education. For example, states such as Kansas, Rhode Island, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Nebraska are working with institutions of higher education to ensure that coursework and degrees are aligned with the states' competency frameworks.

### Highlights from State Renewal Applications:

**Missouri:** "A professional registry for child care providers and school age professionals is maintained by the University of Missouri's Opportunities in a Professional Education Network (OPEN) Initiative. Through the use of a unique identifier, the OPEN Initiative can track professional development but does not include home visitors. A statewide training calendar is maintained by Child Care Aware® of Missouri to support child care providers with available training opportunities. ... The shared early childhood care and education (ECCE) professional registry and calendar are in need of modernization to support the current users as well as expand utilization for home visiting, as there is no system for professional development for home visitors. A Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems has been created by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Missouri will use this to influence the development of a single, coordinated registry that would combine the existing systems as well as expand to home visitors.

"... Through this funding opportunity, Missouri will build on the existing system to create a coordinated single point of entry for all ECCE professionals in the mixed delivery system (e.g., child care providers, home visitors and preschool teachers). In year one, Missouri will establish shared competencies for all home visitors to inform their professional growth plan and guide ongoing professional development. As a part of this process we will build from the existing Head Start competencies that support family engagement.

"...In year two, home visitors will be able to register in the system and track their participation in professional development. Also in year two, Missouri will expand the RPDCs [Regional Professional Development Centers] to offer onsite trainings to ECCE programs and include ECCE online courses in the VLP [Virtual Learning Platform] to support professionals in public schools. By year three, all professional development for ECCE professionals will be maintained in this single system creating a more efficient way to approve, register and track professional development, reducing duplication and increasing awareness of training opportunities. This collaboration with ECCE professionals builds an inter-disciplinary approach to professional development, which creates a shared understanding and improves connections among ECCE systems."

"As an additional benefit, this system will enhance staff efficacy, collaboration and result in better learning experiences for professionals. Obtaining access to a coordinated, comprehensive professional development system with high quality trainings will improve the knowledge and skills of professionals, thus strengthening the ECCE workforce and, ultimately, increasing retention rates in ECCE programs."

**Florida:** "As part of the Early Learning Florida platform, UF [the University of Florida] will assemble a curated, searchable resource library of thousands of best practices (e.g., lesson plans, pictures of high quality, inclusive, learning environments, family engagement tools, developmentally appropriate activities) so professionals from all B-5 settings can find resources that contribute to high quality ECE. UF is building the capacity within the Early Learning Florida platform to offer online learning communities and create groups that can be open (e.g., all coaches in FL [Florida], infant/toddler teachers serving children with special needs) or by invitation only (e.g., preschool teachers participating in a local project) to further facilitate online sharing of best practices.

... Additionally, OEL [Office of Early Learning] will convene a task force to improve best practices across PD [professional development] opportunities for B-5 in FL's mixed delivery system by 1) improving coordination across existing PD opportunities; 2) aligning PD with Early Learning Standards 3) identifying and implementing new designations (e.g., inclusion, dual language learners, and trauma informed care); 4) addressing articulation agreements; and 5) aligning credentials with wage supports."





## COORDINATED SERVICE PROVISION

### Why are states focused on coordinated service provision?

State systems that coordinate ECE enrollment, referrals and direct services are better equipped to meet the needs of families who may be eligible for and benefit from multiple services. These systems can also reduce burden on families by limiting the number of applications and improving the referral tracking process.

### How are states approaching coordinated service provision?

PDG B-5 states have identified the need to centralize information sources about services such as coordinated enrollment applications and referral systems. The need for better coordination has been cited both within and across systems for education, child welfare, health, mental health,

### What is coordinated service provision?

Coordinated service provision refers to state and/or local agency coordination around ECE enrollment, referrals, and/or direct services to support young children and their families.

and employment. States also acknowledge the need for a coordinated approach to following up with families on referrals and streamlining eligibility criteria for services. State plans often focus on coordinating services for specific populations such as tribal families, families with children with disabilities, families experiencing homelessness or involvement with the child welfare system, and English language learners.

### State Approaches for Coordinating Service Provision

#### Technology enhancements to improve service coordination

- Develop a centralized website, portal, or app where the public can access information about services
- Create a centralized phone number for information about services
- Develop a centralized, coordinated referral/intake system that streamlines the process for enrolling in multiple programs across agencies (e.g., by coordinating/tracking referrals, creating a common application, establishing unified eligibility standards)

#### Focus on special populations

- Improve service coordination for special populations (e.g., tribal populations, children with disabilities, families experiencing homelessness, families involved with the child welfare system, English language learners)

#### Cross-system resources and supports

- Develop a centralized set of resources for a particular audience, such as parents, providers, or particular types of providers
- Identify a specific position/staff person to coordinate services statewide or within regions
- Identify approaches for aligning early childhood services with other fields (e.g., home visiting, mental health services)
- Increase communications and shared knowledge between providers so that providers are aware of other services and are better equipped to connect families to those services
- Develop plans to provide universal services (e.g., universal home visiting, universal screening)
- Create maps that help identify gaps and overlap in service provision



## Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**Kansas:** “Similar to a higher education common application process, which allows a prospective student to search for and apply to multiple institutions of higher education at the same time, our ECCE Common Application Pilot (Common App) will enable 501c(3)s, local governments, and unified school districts to apply to multiple funding opportunities through a streamlined process. Through PDG, Quality Enhancement Subgrants will be added as a component of the Common App, along with ECBG [Early Childhood Block Grant]. Other potential Common App funding sources include Title V Aid to Local, KSDE [Kansas State Department of Education] preschool programs, and Kansas Parents as Teachers. All applicants will be required to participate in the 1-800-CHILDREN resource and referral system, enroll in L2Q [Links to Quality], and accept child care subsidies (if applicable). The following section describes each quality enhancement and targeting strategy. Technical assistance will support organizations in targeted geographic areas to introduce the Common App and identify strategies to address local needs.”



**Minnesota:** “Minnesota will fund Tribal Nations and local collaborations to coordinate services, build capacity and pilot initiatives, and provide open feedback loops to ensure continuous improvement and responsive practice, policy, programs and systems for pregnant and parenting families with children through age 5 through two types of subgrants:

- Implementation Hubs subgrantees test the centralized access and navigation systems (Help Me Connect) described in Activity 3 and begin migration of delivery of aligned existing state services.
- Community Solutions subgrantees cultivate and/or sustain authentic community engagement systems and partnerships to promote community capacity, social capital, health and racial equity, and local action to better serve pregnant and parenting families with young children through the removal of family and community-based risk factors and promotion of trauma informed, culturally responsive programs and services.

“From the subgrants, Minnesota will learn how and where the state should invest to ensure that the universally designed central intake and navigation system (Help Me Connect) can continue to be supported by relationship and trust-based navigation models at the local level that allow for more access of state programs and services by previously hard to reach and underserved communities.”



## ■ MAXIMIZING COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

### Why are states focused on maximizing communication?

Clearer and more intentional communications with families can expand access to programs and services. It can also improve families' understanding of available services and programs. Bidirectional communications between families and government agencies can inform agency decision making about what is working well and what can be improved.

### How are states maximizing communication?

There are two main ways in which PDG B-5 states are enhancing communications with families. Unidirectional methods most often include public awareness campaigns, public service announcements, and marketing strategies. These efforts can involve informing parents and providers about available services or educating families about ECE issues in active and targeted ways. Additionally, some states

### What is meant by maximizing communication?

Maximizing communications refers to efforts to increase engagement with families to ensure that they have relevant information about and/or are engaged in decisions about parenting supports and ECE programs and services. These communications may involve universal outreach or target special populations. They may also be unidirectional or bidirectional.

plan to share data and PDG B-5 updates through websites, data-sharing portals, and pre-formulated reports. These resources are intended to support providers and families in using real-time information in meaningful ways. The most common bidirectional method is involving families in decision-making processes through advisory councils or other decision-making settings.

### State Approaches for Maximizing Communications with Families

- Include family and provider representatives on existing advisory groups and councils or create new structures to inform decision making and/or provide input on their experiences
- Target special populations in communication outreach efforts, including tribal communities, children with disabilities, families experiencing homelessness, families involved with the child welfare system, and English language learners
- Create coordinated public awareness campaigns to inform the public about services and the benefits of ECE
- Increase transparency about programs and services by providing easier access to data
- Improve reach of dissemination efforts



### Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**Florida:** “Florida will provide families with information on how to support their children’s development and how to recognize quality in ECE. Expanding on the video vignettes for families created with PDG, OEL [Office of Early Learning] will create an inventory of existing vignettes and video resources currently available for parents and families across sectors and identify gaps where new resources are needed. From these gaps, OEL will work with a contractor over the next three years to create up to 120 new vignettes in English and Spanish (40 each year, as needed) for families to support their children as they develop. Additionally, DCF [Department of Children and Families] will work to create a series of up to 30 engaging PSA/video clips for parents about health, safety and quality in ECE environments to provide visuals of what they should look for when they select ECE programs for their children. Informed by family feedback, these will be in multiple languages, short and engaging, and provide connections to other resources. OEL will expand this library of video vignettes by identifying and leveraging existing videos developed by ECE partners.”



**Alabama:** “Targeted, well-crafted, easily discernable messaging will be developed with traditionally difficult-to-reach and diverse populations in mind, including the families of English language learners, tribal communities, and busy working parents.”





## COORDINATED FUNDING

### Why are states focused on coordinated funding?

ECE agencies administer various federal, state, and local funding streams. Over the years, state and local governments have applied creative solutions to managing multiple funding sources. Yet, the result is often a complex patchwork of funding that creates unintended administrative and access challenges. Fragmented funding can also create unpredictable financial conditions and result in the inequitable distribution of resources, implementation barriers due to administrative requirements, and/or the inefficient use of funds. States are focused on coordinating funding to address these conditions. They are also focused on improving funding coordination to better align eligibility for services and reduce burden on community-based organizations that need to submit multiple applications to secure funds from different streams.

### How are states approaching coordinated funding?

Some PDG B-5 states are focused on the coordination of funding for direct services. For example, Maryland is focused on interventions that improve equity and ECE quality in regions with high concentrations of vulnerable children. Other states, such as Florida, are restructuring their funding mechanisms to prioritize other aspects of the ECE system such as professional development.

### What is coordinated funding?

Mixed delivery systems often include siloed funding streams for different programs and services. Coordinated funding refers to strategies used to combine or align different funding sources – such as blending and braiding funding, conducting funding stream analysis or research, reforming financing structures, and strengthening alignment of funding streams.

Other states are demystifying how ECE funding can be blended or braided to serve young children. For example, Colorado plans to create an integrated financing toolkit for ECE programs to help them maximize available federal and state funding streams. Kansas is exploring avenues for reducing the burden on providers and districts that access multiple different funding streams.

States are also tackling funding fragmentation by investing in research to understand the most effective approaches for better aligning ECE funding streams. For example, Rhode Island is analyzing funding and cost data to identify effective funding models and the viability of integrating new revenue streams.

### State Approaches for Coordinating Funding

#### Reform financing structure

- Align funds across systems such as pre-kindergarten, Head Start, Early Head Start, and licensing
- Target investments to improve equity and quality in particular geographic areas with high concentrations of vulnerable children
- Prioritize funding for the implementation of evidence-based models programming
- Expand slots
- Revamp tiered reimbursement structures

#### Demystify how funding is braided and blended

- Identify strategies for braiding funding across Child Care and Development Fund, Head Start, and state funding with an eye toward improving access to

high-quality ECE programs

- Create a financing toolkit for ECE programs to blend and braid funding
- Create task forces to review how funds are blended and braided, and streamline the process
- Identify promising practices for blending and braiding funds for infant, toddler, and preschool programs

#### Conduct research on funding options

- Establish ECE funding commission or workgroup to research funding strategies and options
- Conduct a funding stream and cost analysis to project and assess different funding opportunities



## Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**Rhode Island:** “Rhode Island is conducting a funding stream and cost analysis for the B-5 system. The report will provide cost model analyses and projections, recommendations for leveraging existing federal, state and local funding streams, and the identification of new potential revenue streams.”



**Oregon:** “Blending and braiding of funds is a part of Oregon’s sustainability strategy. Oregon is working to align its mixed-delivery programs through its legislative and policy work, as well as its implementation work. This includes leveraging the PDG B-5 Grant to identify promising practices in blending and braiding funding across its infant/toddler and preschool programs. Because of this grant, more programs will blend Baby Promise and Preschool Promise funds, and use federal Head Start dollars with state Oregon Prekindergarten dollars. This will help to identify how funding streams can be used more efficiently and surface obstacles to blending and braiding.”



**Illinois:** “In order to better understand the most effective way to align ECCE funding streams (including, at minimum, CCAP, HS/EHS [Head Start/Early Head Start], Illinois’ ECBG, Title I, and local education funds) to ensure achievement of our goals, the Governor will establish an ECCE Funding Commission in November 2019. The Commission’s goals are to: 1) determine the full funding need for an at scale, high-quality ECCE system for Illinois; 2) clarify the State’s ECCE funding priorities; 3) determine the most effective mechanisms for equitably distributing ECCE funding; 4) determine whether ECCE governance changes are necessary to implement equitable funding; and 5) structure a management and performance measurement system that tracks equitable access to and the quality and effectiveness of ECCE services.”



## IMPROVED TRANSITIONS

### Why are states focused on improving transitions?

States are increasingly focused on strengthening kindergarten transition practices and activities to position families and children for school success. Smooth transitions can reduce stress and improve academic growth and family involvement over the kindergarten year. Kindergarten teachers can also benefit from information sharing with ECE teachers about their students' needs and developmental skills.

### How are states approaching improving transitions?

Many PDG B-5 states are attempting to improve the transition experience by focusing on information sharing between ECE programs and schools. States are also focused on aligning curricula, promoting educator practices and services, and communicating with families about

### What are transitions?

Children's entry into kindergarten is an important developmental milestone. Children enter kindergarten having a range of prior experiences (e.g., parental care only, family-based care, center-based care, a mix of care settings). This period of adjustment can be challenging for some families and children as they adapt to new expectations and environments in kindergarten.

expectations and available supports. Throughout this work, many states are focused on creating more equitable transitions for special populations, such as children with special needs, children from low-income families, English language learner households, children experiencing homelessness, and children who are refugees.

### State Approaches for Coordinating Service Provision

- Encourage collaboration among community-based ECE programs and districts to better align assessment, instruction, and leadership
- Develop a transition roadmap that facilitates connections between child-school, family-school, school-school, and community-school systems
- Hold a Transition Summit to promote collaboration and sharing of best practices and enhance coordination across services
- Coordinate among Head Start and local educational agencies to develop plans for children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten
- Develop memoranda of understanding to facilitate information sharing across sectors and programs about children's developmental progress
- Promote awareness and education for parents and providers around best practices for transitions
- Align standards and curricula across ECE and kindergarten programs
- Offer a program for principals to improve their understanding of the ECE system and practices for seamless transitions to elementary schools
- Convene a task force comprising representatives from ECE and K-12 systems to design a comprehensive transition plan
- Integrate additional fields in the transition process and planning phases, such as mental health providers, pediatricians, home visiting
- Create a formal family navigator program to facilitate transitions across diverse B-5 systems (e.g., child care, pediatrics, community health)





## Highlights from State Renewal Applications:



**Washington:** “Data from the Washington State needs assessment shows kindergarten readiness disparities are most pronounced for children from tribal or refugee and immigrant communities and children with special circumstances, which includes children with disabilities, children with child welfare involvement, or children who experience homelessness. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families [DCYF] will partner with OSPI [Office of the Superintendent of Public Education] to implement three interrelated strategies in PDG 2.0: 1) Strengthen kindergarten classroom learning that builds on children’s experiential learning in their homes and early learning programs; 2) Deepen collaboration between early learning settings and K-12 schools to share best practices and enroll children in setting that best meets their needs; and 3) Maximize the use of GOLD® to support children’s continuum of growth from birth to age 8.”



**New Hampshire:** “New Hampshire [NH] will support the ECCE workforce that cares for children as they transition into the early elementary school grades through the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Transition Project. To date, NH has lacked the capacity to collect and aggregate standardized, statewide data/information on children’s preparedness for success in school upon entering Kindergarten. Based on the PDG Needs Assessment, there is a need to improve the Kindergarten entry process and strengthen the pre-Kindergarten entry connection with parents and local child care/early learning programs. NH aims to address the identified needs for standardized KEA; and strengthen transitions, family/community partnerships, and the alignment of standards, curriculum, assessment, and expected child outcomes. NH will convene a KEA-Transition Task Force to engage in a facilitated process to design a focused, comprehensive plan to address the issues identified in the Needs Assessment. The task force will be comprised of a broad group of representatives from the private early childhood programs, public/private sectors, state and local organizations, cross-disciplinary professions, birth to five/public school program teachers and administrators, family organizations, policymakers, and parents.”



For more than 50 years, Abt Associates has been a global leader in state-of-the-art research, evaluation, and technical assistance. We help answer hard questions that lead to important decisions about what works in public policy and programs. Our early childhood experts focus on solving pressing issues—ranging from workforce development needs to program quality supports to the development and expansion of equitable and culturally responsive curricula, programs, and services. Our research, evaluation, and technical assistance projects focus on the implementation and effectiveness of local, state, federal, and international early childhood initiatives and systems around the world. We help policy makers identify what works and provide technical assistance and strategic advising about the design and implementation of complex initiatives and systems.



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