

November 2018

**NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BIRTH THROUGH FIVE PROPOSAL OVERVIEW**

The vision of the New York State Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five project is for every child in New York to be supported by a mixed-delivery system that is informed by parent voice and provides access to high quality, equitable and comprehensive early care and learning environments and services essential for successful development and lifelong success. New York's expansive early childhood infrastructure and investment in health, education, nutrition, social and other needed services reflect a strong commitment to supporting young children and their families. Yet, it is evident that our state's current early childhood configuration, with multiple oversight agencies and varying funding streams, workforce qualifications and compensation scales, results in agencies operating in silos and using resources inefficiently. These differences translate into inequitable accessibility and quality of early care and learning opportunities for children, particularly our most vulnerable.

The New York State Council on Children and Families, in partnership with the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, the New York State Education Department, the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Center for Human Services Research at the State University of New York at Albany, the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute at the City University of New York, other public and private agencies, and, most importantly, parents representing vulnerable and underserved populations, plans to achieve the following outcomes with the successful implementation of this grant:

1. A comprehensive analysis of access to early childhood programs that delivers a more nuanced understanding of parent need and a detailed assessment of the system's supply and demand;
2. A stronger early childhood care and education mixed delivery system that fully informs and engages families in their children's early care and education choices;
3. New financing strategies, including braided public and private funding and seamless coordination among early childhood programs to support New York's mixed delivery system;
4. Increased numbers of early childhood programs with active linkages to pediatricians, dentists, and early childhood mental health consultants;
5. A coordinated approach to sharing best practices and technical assistance;
6. Consistent use of standard practices to support smooth transitions for children and families, from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education programs, and from early care and education programs to elementary school;
7. Strengthen professional early childhood workforce development;
8. Integration of the state's early childhood data to enable better alignment of the early childhood system and of child outcomes; and
9. Expansion of QUALITYstarsNY, a five-star rating system, to ensure more children, especially those who are most vulnerable, have access to quality early childhood programs.

It is expected that grant award announcements will be made December 17, 2018, and the one-year grant would start shortly thereafter. A new PDGB5 competition is expected for years two through four for which New York will be eligible regardless of year one funding.

Highlights of the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG5) Project Proposal

The PDG5 application includes five prescribed activities. If funded, work can begin on activities one through four immediately, activity five can only begin once the funder approves New York's needs assessment and strategic plan. It is anticipated that this will occur by late April 2019. The total funding New York requested is \$12,298,600, and the state will provide a 30 percent non-federal match.

- 1) Needs assessment
- 2) Strategic plan
- 3) Parent choice and knowledge
- 4) Best practices
- 5) Quality improvement

Activity One: Needs Assessment

PDG5 staff will partner with the Center for Human Services Research at SUNY Albany to conduct the needs assessment. The scope of the needs assessment is as follows:

Define and describe key terms: quality, access, vulnerable, underserved, children in rural areas.
Review current availability, accessibility and quality of state's mixed delivery system, especially as it pertains to vulnerable populations.
Identify information gaps re: availability & quality of the various components of the mixed delivery system & related support services, with attention to working parents & those seeking employment or job training.
Identify barriers to combining funding to enable more efficient use of resources to maximize choice will be identified and strategies to address obstacles to collaboration.
Identify factors that impede alignment and coordination across mixed delivery system settings, including regulatory & statutory barriers, resulting in uneven program access, quality and parent choice.
Assess parent knowledge re: mixed delivery system options, ability to access needed supports, factors impacting care choices (e.g., availability of openings, tax credits, subsidies, hours of operation).
Examine factors impacting transitions from mixed delivery system programs to kindergarten.
Identify state capacity to develop and track measurable indicators of progress to create a more coordinated and responsive mixed delivery system.
Identify barriers and alternatives to gradually phasing out child care subsidies pursuant to CCDBG requirements.
Develop a methodology to track children on program waiting lists.
Examine the compensation, education, training, background check requirements and needs of the mixed delivery system workforce.
Identify data to establish a data resource that informs an ongoing quality improvement system.

Activity Two: Strategic Plan

PDGB5 staff will work with the Early Childhood Advisory Council, its Steering Committee, and work teams to amend the ECAC cross-sector Strategic Plan using data from the PDGB5 needs assessment. Parents will be added to the ECAC membership and to the ECAC Steering Committee. The strategic planning process will be led by a facilitator, and will be informed by parent voice, the Department of Health's First 1,000 Days on Medicaid 10-Point Plan, the NYS Board of Regents' Early Childhood Workgroup's Blue Ribbon Committee, and other NY efforts focused on promoting the well-being of young children and families.

Activity Three: Maximizing Parent Choice and Knowledge

The activities below were included in the proposal.

Collaboration re: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Parts B & C and Supporting Smooth Transitions for Children & Families: PDGB5 staff will collaborate with SED's Office of Early Learning's Preschool Policy Unit and DOH's Division of Family Health to promote smoother transitions for children from early intervention services to preschool special education, and in turn from preschool special education to kindergarten.

Parent Leadership Conference: A statewide Parent Leadership Conference and four local parent leadership events will be conducted to further build parents' knowledge about NY's early childhood system, and to enhance system knowledge of parent needs. PDGB5 staff will partner with and model the event after the work of two powerful NY parent advocacy groups: Families Together NY (a family-run organization representing families of children with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges) and Parent to Parent NY (representing parents who care for children with special healthcare needs or developmental disabilities). In addition, PDGB5 staff will collaborate with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agencies, the Head Start Collaboration Office, and the NYS Parenting Education Partnership to most effectively coordinate and enhance parent knowledge and choice, with special attention to engaging linguistically diverse families and providers.

Promotion of Child Care Tax Credits to Empower Parents: Mixed delivery system program staff will be critical in expanding parent choice, playing a key role in informing parents about how to access federal and state Child and Dependent Care tax credits. As parents become more aware of their options to help pay for care, they will be better able to select the setting that works best for their family. The Early Education Tax Credit is a proposal under consideration aimed at expanding child care choices for low-income families by allowing them to receive a tax credit based on the fee and the quality of the program.

Family Resource Navigators at Homeless Shelters: To empower families who are especially vulnerable and disproportionately represent underserved racial groups, Family Resource Navigators will be placed at homeless shelters. These navigators will equip parents and shelter staff with knowledge about services to support children during a traumatic period. Information about child care options and a child's legal right to remain in his or her school of origin while living in temporary housing (under the federal McKinney Vento Act), will be provided.

Home Visiting Coordination Initiative: Building off the work of the NYS Home Visiting (HV) Coordination Initiative, expected to complete its first year of work in the Summer of 2019, a series of regional meetings will be held to bring together evidence-based home visiting programs/providers under the purview of NYS OCFS and NYS DOH. This cross-agency forum will provide an opportunity for collaboration and discussions about shared trainings, referrals, and community partnerships. An investment in this HV Coordination Initiative will enable more widespread application and advancement in 2-generation strategies that align with the state's vision to support vulnerable families.

Transition Practices: The area of transition practices has an extensive body of research documenting its effectiveness and importance. Based on research and materials from the Office of Head Start, CCF has conducted 16 successful Kindergarten Transition Summits. Moving forward, PDGB5 staff, in partnership with SED and others, will conduct four regional Kindergarten Transition Summits and, with seed money from this grant, a series of local forums across the state. All stakeholders will be invited to bring together families, school district administrators and PreK and kindergarten teachers, CRRs, special education providers, Head Start, CBOs, family child care providers, child care centers, parent organizations, health care providers, and local coalitions (e.g., Success by Six). The goal of these events will be to encourage the development of local transition teams. Based on CCF and SED's experience, these local transition teams will continue to meet and sustain themselves with minimal to no further state support.

Parent Education Campaign and Resources: PDGB5 staff will contract with a media firm to develop and implement a culturally-relevant and multi-lingual parent education campaign about NY's early childhood system to raise awareness of program options. Key messages will be informed by parent focus groups who represent vulnerable and typically marginalized populations (migrant farm workers, families temporarily living in homeless shelters, foster parents, fathers) and translated into prevalent languages in NY. Parent focus groups will be conducted in each of the state's ten Empire State Development regions to help inform the media campaign, and the messaging will be tested with ten additional regional focus groups (a total of 20 focus groups will be conducted). In addition to producing print and display informational materials based on parent feedback, a public broadcasting provider will create an informative public service announcement to share the available mixed delivery system options. Multiple communication channels will be used to share information (e.g., social media, print, public service announcements, bus shelter/subway ads, posters, etc.) and a wide range of partners will be involved in the dissemination of messages (e.g., pediatricians, employers, grocery stores, barber and beauty shops, local departments of social services, mixed delivery system programs, etc.). Additionally, current CCF websites designed to assist parents will be integrated into a parent portal. The Parent Portal will offer Google Translate for languages other than English. PDGB5 staff also will coordinate the development of a user-friendly App to help parents easily find early childhood care and education programs.

Activity Four: Best Practices to be Shared

1. Program Funding Strategies: Strategies to maximize funding, such as blending and braiding multiple funding streams and the implementation of sliding fee scales, will be widely shared through the dissemination of and training on the CCF *Guide to Blending and Braiding Funds to Support Early Childhood Education*. As well, further exploration and promotion of these innovative funding strategies will be advanced.

2. Shared Services: Building on NY's existing shared services website and platform, Shared Services will be supported so that the early childhood care and education workforce can more easily connect with resources to help them sustain high-quality teaching and learning, while ensuring that all necessary fiscal and administrative tasks are performed and benefit from collective purchasing rates.

3. Practices that Promote Effective Early Learning Environments and Healthy Child Development: Evidence-based training and practice-based coaching will be offered to promote professional development and to assist parents in supporting the healthy development of children.

- *Pyramid Model Hubs* will be piloted in five selected CCRRs in vulnerable communities. The Pyramid Model NYS Leadership Team will convene an orientation for selected CCRRs that will be supported to implement sustainable program changes that improve capacity to serve children, families and staff. The Pyramid Model Consortium will provide ongoing TA to the state.
- Conduct twelve regional *Parents Interacting with Infants* (a Pyramid Model module) for parent educators to use to strengthen dyadic parent/child relationships.
- *Positive Solutions for Families* (a Pyramid Model module) will be offered in 30 workshops for staff and parents about social and emotional development and how to better support children's development of positive social skills.
- *Strengthening Families: Protective Factors training of trainers (TOT)* for 50 trainers who will become certified in the curriculum and then deliver training locally. Five trainings for up to 100 participants will be conducted in local programs during this grant year.
- *Think About Brain Building (TABB)* materials and curriculum will be created and taught to Legally Exempt and family child care providers to better support children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development through everyday activities.
- *Training on How to Support Children with Special Needs* will be provided to mixed delivery system providers to deepen their understanding and increase their skills to serve children with special needs. Higher subsidy rates will be explored for these newly trained providers.

4. Professional Development and Capacity: ECAC's Early Learning Focus Area Workforce Team determined that approved training protocols, practice-based coaching, and series-based training are the most effective strategies to strengthen the workforce. With grant support, this team will build on foundational work to develop series-based training for trainers, directors, and providers focused on the use of the Core Body of Knowledge, 2-generational approaches, and building cultural and linguistic competence. The team will also work to increase the number of trainers and coaches earning the state's Training and Technical Assistance Professional (TTAP) credential and to institutionalize a statewide training approval function.

5. Career Pathways: Five regional CCRRs in underserved areas will be selected to better meet the career development needs of the local mixed delivery system workforce, replicating the work of the Career Development Center at PDI. This activity will help to address the dire need of mixed delivery system organizations to recruit and hire staff who are well-trained and educated to ensure that young children have access to quality, regardless of delivery type. As well, it is consistent with the state’s work on career and workforce development, building on the SED Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations for strengthening the early childhood workforce, and the research of the Institute of Medicine report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8*.

6. Expansion of the Aspire Registry for NY’s Early Childhood Workforce: The Aspire Registry is a longstanding priority of the ECAC and many other state and local agencies and is on its way to reaching the state’s approximately 110,000 early childhood workforce members (with more than 35,000 active Aspire users). Aspire serves as a comprehensive and centralized database for mixed delivery system professionals in NY, compiling and verifying their degrees, certificates, credentials, and professional development, work history, native language, study plan status, and a range of additional career information. Aspire participation is required by QSNY and NYC licensing, and many others voluntarily participate. Currently, there is no user fee to participate; however, beginning in 2022, all members of Aspire will pay a nominal fee for annual membership, which will sustain the operation of the registry. Available data is used in licensing compliance visits, QSNY ratings, and research being conducted locally. Aspire also is part of the National Registry Alliance receiving its quality assurance certificate in 2017, contributing to a growing national dataset. With expanded Registry participation, essential cross-system workforce data will be collected to inform the NA and SP and improve the coordination and quality of NY’s mixed delivery system.

7. Leadership Mentoring: Recognizing the pivotal role that effective leadership plays in strengthening the overall quality of the mixed delivery system, PDI will replicate its successful model of providing leadership mentoring services. These services include coaching, study groups, and professional development events, such as the development of a Director Mentoring program, in conjunction with QSNY, identifying exceptional program directors, and those representing linguistically and culturally diverse populations to serve as mentors to directors who need support with their pedagogical leadership, using an evidence-based “communities of practice” model. Emphasis will be placed on providing such services to underserved areas of the state. The state also recognizes the need to strengthen elementary school leaders’ knowledge and understanding of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning in the early grades. SED will partner with PDI and continue to develop resources and provide remote and onsite TA and professional development that speaks to school leaders. Finally, in concert with OCFS, PDGB5 staff will develop a two-day advanced course for directors to align with CCDBG progressive training to be offered in six locations across the state.

Activity Five: Quality Improvement Activities

NY’s Child Care Deserts: NY covers a large geographic area, and while the state is home to one of the largest cities in the world, it also has a very large rural population. Most (61%) New Yorkers live in “Child Care Deserts” where families struggle to find adequate child care for their young children. Partnering with OCFS, the ECLC and their local CCRR members, PDGB5 staff will be able to (1) swiftly leverage existing networks to recruit and provide intensive supports for individuals who intend to pursue child care licensing, (2) promote high-quality business and program practices in selected high

need communities, and (3) develop a training curriculum and TA strategies to help programs implement best practices. Also, the PDGB5 staff will explore the establishment of higher payment rates or other incentives to address the higher costs of providing care in rural areas where there may not be enough working families with young children to consistently operate at capacity.

QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY): To improve quality in mixed delivery system settings serving vulnerable populations, components of QSNY will be strengthened and participation will increase in high-need communities, including at least one additional tribal community. QSNY has been in operation for six years, serving all types of regulated early childhood programs, including center and family-based child care, EHS and HS, and PreK. The 75 standards that make up QSNY focus on Children’s Learning Environment, Staff Qualifications and Experience, Management and Leadership, and Family Engagement. While best practices in children’s health and mental health are embedded across the four areas, QSNY will also be working with the Department of Health to enhance existing standards to reflect a stronger emphasis on nutrition and physical activity. Quality Improvement Specialists are assigned to participating sites and engage community-based assets to advance each site’s quality improvement plan. Currently, QSNY serves 824 sites across the state and initial data analysis indicates that 84% of participating sites increased their total quality score over a 3-year period and 65% earned 4 or 5 stars after 3 years of quality improvement (5 stars being the highest possible rating). The current infrastructure supports using PDGB5 funds to (1) continue building system components such as a more functional Quality Improvement Plan tool and other data system enhancements, (2) test the effectiveness of quality improvement strategies, and (3) analyze the impact of the QSNY modifications on approximately 200 sites.