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| Project Title | South Carolina's PDG B-5 Comprehensive ECE System |
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South Carolina (SC) Department of Social Services (DSS), Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) in partnership with SC First Steps, the state's public/private initiative for school readiness at the state and county level, and our PDG Partners have a shared commitment to continue, expand and reconceptualize activities funded by the PDG B-5 initial grant. SC recently completed a 2-part statewide comprehensive needs assessment informed by the state's Data Warehouse; existing assessments from partners such as Head Start; and the wisdom of over 440 early care and education (ECE) providers, partner organizations and families who attended one or more of 15 regional meetings; 3,114 individuals who completed a survey related to B-5 needs; and 1,495 people who participated in 130 focus groups held across all 46 South Carolina counties. The Needs Assessment supported SC's understanding of opportunities to strengthen the state's integrated ECE system and has been the key informant of our Strategic Plan. SC's ECE System Strategic Plan was completed in October 2019 and informs ways to implement changes to the ECE system that focus on our greatest need: to maximize the quality and availability of quality ECE options for low income and disadvantaged families. The plan builds on the strengths of SC's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan, existing successes, and partnerships between public and private entities.

SC's Proposed Grant Project will include activities designed to: refine and enhance SC's statewide, birth-through-five Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan; improve the coordination and delivery of services across models and funding streams in SC's mixed delivery system; coordinate the efficient use of existing resources to improve the participation of children, particularly vulnerable, underserved, or unserved children and children with, or at risk for, disabilities, in a mixed delivery system of federal, state, and local ECE programs; improve program quality, while maintaining access and availability of services; maximize family and parental choice, knowledge and engagement; enhance school readiness for children from low-income and disadvantaged families; and insure effective transitions for children into elementary school.

SC looks forward to sharing lessons learned from our implementation science informed program performance evaluation and to utilizing funds received to establish a system of care and education that can help us realize our vision to support each and every child meeting their potential.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outlines expected outcomes to be achieved by PDG activity category (**see**

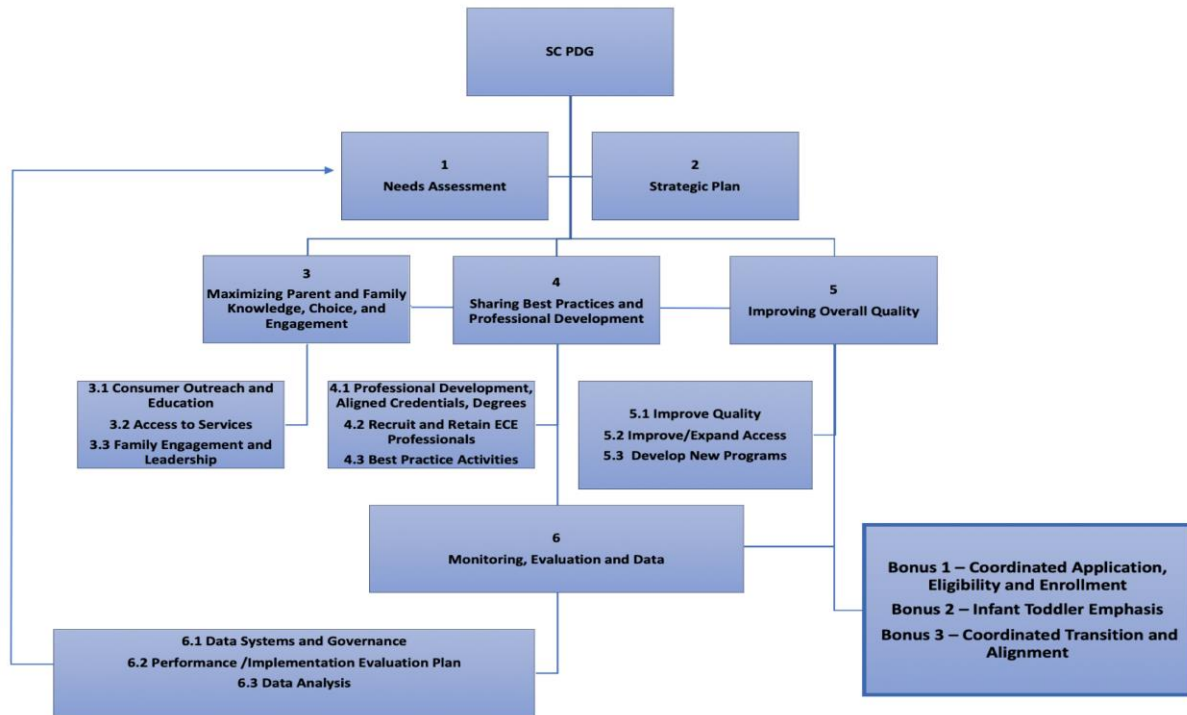**Project Timeline and Milestones for service targets, as applicable**):

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| **Activity 1 – Statewide Needs Assessment** |
| Completion of B-5 needs and resource assessment by all 46 county First Steps local partnerships |
| Convene Institutions of Higher Education Collaborative to plan and implement updates to initial Needs Assessment. |
| Develop effective/valid tools to collect data related to local needs, priorities, and barriers mirroring state-level Needs Assessment process as appropriate. |
| Explore data availability, quality, and connections between needs, strategic plan, and performance evaluation. |
| Review and update state-level measurable quality indicators. |
| Work with team leads in Activities 3, 4, and 5 to focus on connections between Needs Assessment goals and objectives and work in these areas. |
| **Activity 2 – Statewide Strategic Plan** |
| Assess strategies and action steps for each objective and make adjustments. |
| Quarterly/Annual work sessions to share progress and provide feedback. |
| Quarterly and annual reports for the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). |
| Convene family focus groups to support feedback loops. |
| **Activity 3 - Maximizing Parent and Family Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement** |
| Full implementation of a single point of entry/central web portal for ECE services and enrollment for families. |
| Increased number of families participating in evidence-based home visitation and parent support services, with a priority given to communities with concentrations of premature birth, low-birth weight infants and infant mortality. |
| Available navigators to help both English speaking and non-English speaking families and families with disabilities access information to support knowledge and choice. |
| Increased utilization of WIC, SNAP and other public supports for nutrition and wellness for children B-5. |
| Families included in the design/evaluation of resources and delivery systems for services. |
| Increase awareness and provide support to families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing as they transition through the system (Part C to Part B619 to Kindergarten) |
| Develop protocol, referral system, and resource material for a NICU transition program in collaboration with Part C (Baby Coach). |
| **Activity 4 - Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development** |
| Increased percentage of ECE teachers completing post-secondary education programs. |
| Availability and accessibility of the Workforce Registry to document educational/career progress and compensation levels of teachers and directors. |

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|---|
| All Technical Assistance (TA) and training materials for early care and education programs using evidence-based models/frameworks to address the support of children with disabilities and practices that reduce suspension and expulsion. |
| Increased number of parent home visitation staff demonstrating core competencies for working with vulnerable families. |
| Increased number of qualified (endorsed) mental health service providers that support children B-5 and families. |
| TA consultation and training materials teach practices that support successful transition of all children in their early care and education journey. |
| Increased number of young children with disabilities transitioning from Part C to Part B 619 that are served in inclusive environments without disruption of services. |
| Increased number of families participating in Countdown to Kindergarten and other programs that support successful transitions of children from home to ECE programs, across programs and into kindergarten. |
| Increased number of providers receiving pre-service and in-service preparation programs related to: trauma informed care, SE development and infant mental health, positive child guidance, caregiver well-being, ACEs, and Strengthening Families Protective Factors. |
| Expansion of Inclusion SCIC |
| Expand on year 1 PDG to provide program-wide Pyramid Model Implementation and design a Community of Practice for trainers. |
| **Activity 5 - Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access** |
| Increased percentage of children B-5, including low income children and children with disabilities, accessing high quality ECE programs. |
| Increased number of high-quality child care and early education programs, including home-based child care, in areas designated as having insufficient high-quality programs available to families (i.e., child care deserts). |
| Increased number of B-5 children screened, identified and accessing early intervention. |
| Increased number of children served by a mental health service provider. |
| Increased number of ECE programs who meet ABC Quality standards. |
| Services targeted to geographic areas and demographic groups that lack specific services. |
| Expansion of Nurse Consultant Network. Nurse-led program for child care providers Child Care Ready for All (CRAwl) to address needs of children w/ special health care needs. |
| **Activity 6 – Integrated Data and Evaluation** |
| Established operational data governance structure for South Carolina's publicly-funded programs serving children B-5. |
| Remaining publicly funded early learning programs provided the opportunity to join the B-5 Integrated Data System. |
| Successful implementation of PDG activities with support and engagement of project partners, agency leadership (ECAC) and policy makers. |

## APPROACH

**SC PDG Renewal Plan of Action**

The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant is led by the SC Department of Social Services and activities are coordinated and administered in partnership with SC Department of Education, SC First Steps and SC Head Start Collaboration Office. With this grant funding, SC's Early Childhood Education (ECE) system will increase access to quality early childhood programs and services for vulnerable children through: Child-serving agencies and organizations sharing a common vision, goals, and outcomes for the state's birth through five system; Coordination, collaboration, and alignment across the state's mixed delivery system that supports an increase in access for families; Shared recruitment and application processes; Coordinated efforts to maximize parents' knowledge, choice, and engagement; Statewide activities to support transitions for children between various early childhood programs and into elementary school; Shared professional development to better meet the complex social and emotional development needs of vulnerable children and families, including trauma-informed care; Expanded supports to providers to improve quality; and Improved data-driven decision making. All grant activities align with the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan and enhance, expand or build upon activities described and implemented in our initial grant.

SC PDG

1
Needs Assessment

2
Strategic Plan

3
Maximizing Parent and Family Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement

4
Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development

5
Improving Overall Quality

3.1 Consumer Outreach and Education
3.2 Access to Services
3.3 Family Engagement and Leadership

4.1 Professional Development, Aligned Credentials, Degrees
4.2 Recruit and Retain ECE Professionals
4.3 Best Practice Activities

5.1 Improve Quality
5.2 Improve/Expand Access
5.3 Develop New Programs

6
Monitoring, Evaluation and Data

Bonus 1 – Coordinated Application, Eligibility and Enrollment
Bonus 2 – Infant Toddler Emphasis
Bonus 3 – Coordinated Transition and Alignment

6.1 Data Systems and Governance
6.2 Performance /Implementation Evaluation Plan
6.3 Data Analysis

SC's PDG implementation framework recognizes three necessary components of successful implementation: implementation teams; quality and reliable data for feedback loops; and infrastructure supports. In order to efficiently coordinate and align the activities proposed, SC has organized each of the primary activities of the grant into three targeted sub-categories of work. Each sub-category will be supported by an implementation team and team leader. Team leaders in each activity will work together with the leadership, evaluation, strategic plan and needs assessment teams to engage in data collection, continuous quality improvement sessions and feedback loops. Infrastructure supports for the implementation teams and activities will be supported by technical assistance providers and grant leadership. A list of the sub-activities for each Activity on the following page. The most significant obstacle/challenge in implementing the grant activities is the extended time to distribute contracts and funds to partners, delaying the work. DECE has worked with its contracts and grants department to implement new work processes for expediting the contracting work moving forward.

**SC PDG Renewal Activities**

*Note: Activities throughout Application are indicated as **<u>Bold/Underlined</u>** with a sub-category Activity # and an indication of a new or existing/expanded activity*

| Activity 3<br>**Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, & Engagement** | Activity 4<br>**Sharing Best Practices & Professional Development** |
|---|---|
| **3.1 Consumer Outreach and Education**<br>  Shared Identity, Website Portals, Public<br>    Education Campaign<br>**3.2 Access to Services**<br>  System Navigators<br>  PASOs Services for Latino Families<br>  Enhance and Expand Parents as Teachers<br>    and other Evidence-based Parent Supports<br>  WIC Promotion and Increased Utilization<br>  SC Thrive Common Application (Bonus)<br>  Help Me Grow (Bonus)<br>  Beginnings SC<br>  NICU Transition<br>**3.3 Family Engagement and Leadership**<br>  Parent Leadership<br>  Supports for Families with Children with<br>    Special Needs<br>  2 Gen Policy Development | **4.1 Professional Development, Aligned Credentials, Degrees**<br>  Palmetto PreK Jamboree<br>  "Baby Jam" PD Infant/Toddler Seminar Series<br>  Interdisciplinary Learning Community<br>  Multi-Disciplinary Course Content<br>  Online PD Courses<br>  ECE PD Marketing<br>  Supporting the Coaching Workforce<br>  SCETV PD Partnership<br>  Beginnings SC (Hearing Screening)<br>  Pyramid CoP and Law Enforcement Training<br>**4.2 Recruit and Retain ECE Professionals**<br>  Family Child Care Communities of Practice<br>  CCCCD ECE Teacher Retention Bonuses<br>  Smart Money Credential Bonuses<br>  Expansion of T.E.A.C.H.<br>**4.3 Best Practice Activities**<br>  Home Visitor Core Competencies<br>  Be Well Care Well<br>  SC Education Policy Fellows Program<br>  SC Inclusion Collaborative – Expansion<br>  School Improvement Council - Transitions<br>  Countdown to Kindergarten transition<br>  Expand IECMH Consultation (Bonus)<br>  Transdisciplinary Play-Based Asses. Part B |
| Activity 5<br>**Improving Overall Quality** | Activity 6<br>**Data Systems, Governance & Performance Evaluation** |
| **5.1 Improve Quality**<br>  Parents as Teachers FCC and FFN Initiative<br>  ABCQ Infrastructure & Grants/Incentives<br>  Local Support to Improve/Sustain Quality<br>  Inclusion and PITC Specialist Expansion<br>**5.2 Improve/Expand Access**<br>  ABCQ Mixed Delivery Initiatives<br>  ABCQ Promotion and Care Coordination<br>  CRAwl (Child Care Ready for All)<br>**5.3 Develop New Programs**<br>FCC Home Initiative | **6.1 Data Systems and Governance**<br>  Integrated Data System<br>**6.2 Performance Evaluation Plan**<br>  Implementation Evaluation<br>**6.3 Data Analysis** |

## ACTIVITY ONE: PDG B-5 STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**Status, Collaborative Process and Findings of Current Needs Assessment**

In 2019, as part of the South Carolina's (SC) Preschool Development Grant deliverables, a two-part Needs Assessment was conducted. Needs Assessment: Part 1 included a robust process to understand goals, aspirations, and priorities of multiple stakeholders including a large representation of families with young children across all 46 SC counties. Needs Assessment: Part 2 included working with key organizations and stakeholders to address domains and key questions identified by the Administration for Children and Families. The University of South Carolina (USC) led Part 1 of the Needs Assessment process and included an Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Collaborative comprised of four South Carolina public universities, one in each DSS Child Care Licensing Region, to develop systematic, research-based inquiry strategies to effectively capture voices from the field and system users. Through Part 1, approximately 440 people attended one or more of 15 regional meetings to determine priorities, 3,114 surveys were completed, and 1,495 people participated in 130 focus groups held across all 46 South Carolina counties. Based on analysis of data from these multiple sources, the IHE Collaborative identified four overarching goals (Table 1) in each of three areas: early learning and development (ELD), health and wellbeing (HWB), and family and communities (FC). Within each of these goals, multiple objectives were developed and prioritized. Barriers to goals and objectives were also identified.

Table 1: Overarching Goals Cited by Stakeholder Groups

| | Parents/Caregivers | Organizational Representatives | Community Members |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ELD** | 1) Finding high-quality child care/ early ed programs 2) Participating in high-quality child care/early ed programs 3) Knowing what to do for child/children to be ready for school | 1) Knowing what to do for child/children to be ready for school 2) Finding high-quality child care/early ed programs 3) Participating in high-quality child care/early ed programs | 1) Finding high-quality child care/early ed programs 2) Knowing what to do for child/children to be ready for school 3) Being able to pay for high-quality child care/early ed programs |
| **HWB** | 1) Understanding child development 2) Getting services for needs of child/children 3) Being able to afford health care for child or children | 1) Getting services for needs of child/children 2) Understanding child/children's development 3) Being able to get to health care as needed for children | 1) Being able to afford health care for child/children 2) Getting needed services for children 3) Being able to get to health care for children |
| **FC** | 1) Having enough family time 2) Having strong relationships with children 3) Having a support system of friends and family members available | 1) Having community resources and activities to support family life 2) Having a support system of friends and family 3) Having strong relationships with child/children | 1) Having community resources and activities to support family life 2) Having a support system of friends and family 3) Feeling safe in community |

Needs Assessment: Part 2 layered onto Part 1 and engaged key organizational leaders in SC's multi-dimensional system of early care and education, health and wellbeing, and family and community support. Organizational leaders collaborated with their colleagues and users/clients to provide feedback on a series of questions related to the key domains and questions identified by ACF. Fourteen responses were received representing the following organizations and entities: SC Dept. of Social Services (DSS), SC Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS), SC Head Start Collaboration Office, SC Dept. of Education (DOE), SC First Steps to School Readiness (First Steps), SC Inclusion Collaborative, SC Partnership for Inclusion, SC Program for

Infant/Toddler Care (PITC), SC Dept. of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA), and four Early Head Start/Head Start grantees. Needs Assessment: Part 2 organizers merged responses from organizational leaders and Needs Assessment: Part 1 by key domain and question and circulated responses to key organizational stakeholders for review and revision. Through this multi-pronged Needs Assessment process, South Carolina solidified goals, aspirations, objectives, and barriers to inform the Strategic Plan as well as worked with key organizational leaders to clarify aspects related to key domains and questions. Brief descriptions of findings are included below.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

South Carolina has working definitions of quality early childhood care and education (ECE), availability, and vulnerable and underserved children that drive its strategies and initiatives for B-5 children. Definitions are found in the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. We will continue to revisit and refine these definitions through a routine process engaging our organizations and the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). We will focus on how differences in the conceptualization of these definitions are translated into practice at all levels (state, regional, local) valuing concerns, issues, and realities expressed by local-level stakeholders and using equity and family-focused lenses in this work.

**Vulnerable and Underserved Children and Children in Rural Areas**

Almost half (138,000) of SC's 293,653 children under 5 are considered vulnerable ($\leq$ 200% of poverty) and 25% are highly vulnerable ($\leq$100% of poverty). Fifteen of South Carolina's 46 counties have populations less than 20,000. South Carolina is focused on understanding and meeting the needs of these populations as well as understanding priorities and barriers that may be unique for these populations.

**Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education**

South Carolina has data related to the current quality of early care and education for participants in the state's voluntary QRIS (ABC Quality) as well as children enrolled in state-funded prekindergarten programs. Fully understanding accessibility, affordability, and quality across the state's early childhood education programs, but particularly for vulnerable and underserved children in underserved areas is challenging based on the multiple types of early care and education settings for B-5 children. South Carolina is pursuing more effective collaborations and connection of data systems through its newly developed Strategic Plan.

**Unduplicated Number of Children Being Served and Awaiting Services**

There are approximately 293,653 unduplicated 0-5 year old South Carolina children receiving services through programs that provide data to the state's Data Warehouse housed at RFA, including: Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, Child Protective Services, First Steps local partnership programs (home visitation, parent training, child care assistance, health, school transition), Disabilities and Special Needs Services, state-funded 4K and Part B 619 services, Child Care Vouchers, and Health-related services. These data are also disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and county, which we are using in our ongoing understanding of county-level and state-level needs.

**Gaps in Data or Research**

RFA is tasked as the state's Data Warehouse and maintains data related to many publicly funded programs and services. Although Head Start and IDEA Part C (BabyNet) client data are not currently provided to RFA, both provided aggregate data for the compilation of SC's Early Childhood Profile portal (scprofile.com), which was facilitated by RFA and DOE. Private child care/early education data are often not provided at the state level, other than those that

voluntarily choose to participate in ABC Quality. It is difficult to gain accurate counts of enrolled children in child care facilities (other than license capacity), waiting lists at these facilities, and connections between enrollment in these facilities and later prekindergarten and kindergarten enrollment. For the past two years at public school 4K and 5K entry, parents/caregivers are asked to provide information about prior early experiences that is then entered into the K-12 student information system. While this has allowed for some additional understanding of children's trajectories, there have been issues with incomplete reporting.

**Priority Data Needs**

RFA must obtain data agreements between agencies and evaluators  to provide data to any person or organization conducting evaluations or research in South Carolina, and data providers maintain data ownership and have the right to deny access to data if the research questions or inquiry are not considered appropriate or suitable for their data. Organizations also maintain additional data that may be critical to identifying issues or needs but are not included in the Data Warehouse. Connecting data to fully explore B-5 needs and improvements over time is a priority, which must include increasing collaboration, reducing "turf" issues, improving data availability and quality, understanding time commitments/financial implications, and ensuring resource availability related to data quality, reporting, and analysis. Much preliminary groundwork has been completed as part of PDG Activity 1 and the state's current application to USDOE's Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant program (see Activity 6).

**State's Current Measurable Indicators of Progress**

Through scprofile.com, stakeholders can access enrollment data by county for Early Head Start, Head Start, public prekindergarten (school district and licensed child care), and public kindergarten in addition to children ages 0-36 months, 3, 4, and 5 year old children with

disabilities accessing early intervention services, and the number of children receiving child care assistance. SC currently assesses all children within the first 45 days of kindergarten entry in public schools using the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), an assessment with four domains: Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Physical Development and Well-Being; and Social Foundations. In 2018-2019, among the 54,927 SC kindergarteners assessed, 37% were designated as "Demonstrating Readiness" on the Overall Scale (SC Education Oversight Committee, 2019). KRA scores are disaggregated by school district and reported annually by the Education Oversight Committee and at the county-level on scprofile.com and in the annual reports of each local First Steps. SC assesses all prekindergarten children (4-year-olds) enrolled in the SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP), the state's funding source for mixed delivery full-day 4K. DOE is responsible for distributing CERDEP funding to participating public school districts (at or above 75% poverty index) and First Steps administers the program within Head Start and child care providers. CERDEP children are assessed at the beginning of the year and end of year using one of three approved assessments: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), Individual Growth Development Indicators (IGDIs), or Teaching Strategies GOLD. About 61 of the state's 79 school districts, three charter schools, and more than 200 child care centers participate in CERDEP as of 2019. Approximately 25,000 4-year-olds are assessed annually, with results used for formative purposes as well as to understand growth at the end of the prekindergarten year.

There is also a voluntary quality improvement rating system (ABC Quality) for early childhood care and education programs and measures of classroom quality are used within publicly funded prekindergarten programs.

**Early Childhood Facilities**

An ECE facilities needs assessment will begin in 2020 with PDG grant funding. In addition, grant activities are proposed herein to support program efforts to enhance facilities.

**Transition Supports**

The Needs Assessment process both inventoried existing and promising transition strategies and named improving transitions as a key need for SC. Multiple transition support strategies are planned within Activities 3 and 4, which will be evaluated in large part by improvements to the state's B-5 Integrated Data System.

**Ongoing Needs Assessment to Inform Strategic Plan, Understand Progress, and Facilitate State-Level Performance Goals**

Based on the success of the initial Needs Assessment, we propose to continue to engage the Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Collaborative that will include the four original IHEs and one additional IHE based on feedback from PDG Workgroup:

| IHE Collaborative for South Carolina | |
|---|---|
| University of SC | Dr. Leigh D'Amico - Research Assistant Professor in the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Center (REMC) |
| Clemson University | Dr. Sandra Linder - Associate Professor of EC Mathematics Education and Director of the SC Center of Excellence in Innovation for Mathematics and Science |
| College of Charleston | Dr. Kelley Mayer White - Associate Professor in Teacher Education with focus in teacher-child relationships and early literacy development |
| Francis Marion University (HBCU) | Dr. Tammy Palowski - Professor of Early Childhood Education and Director of the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty |
| SC State University (HBCU) | Dr. Reginald Williams - Associate Professor and Coordinator of ECE, Chair of Orangeburg County First Steps, and former SCAEYC president |

This group will meet monthly to revisit and build upon the initial Needs Assessment to: 1) determine strategies such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or regional meetings to inform the revision of the Needs Assessment; 2) ensure representation from groups that did not participate in the previous process in large numbers; 3) assess status of areas needing more

review such as relevance of definitions to differing stakeholders, ECE facility needs and gaps in support to vulnerable children and families; 4) explore prekindergarten and kindergarten readiness data as well as other background data and performance data to identify counties that are underperforming or overperforming based on expectation; and 5) connect the Needs Assessment data, Strategic Plan focus areas, and performance evaluation plan for South Carolina. The IHE Collaborative and REMC will continue its close working relationship with RFA as well as ECAC staff to ensure continuous communication and address data quality and availability in order to fully understand needs and identify progress in meeting needs.

In Year 2, the IHE Collaborative will develop a plan and determine data collection strategies to inform a more robust process to occur in Years 3 and 4 to update the Needs Assessment findings and broaden the findings based on the implementation of innovative and new strategies. Throughout the developmental stages, the plan will be shared with a research methods and equity expert, Dr. Montana Cain from the SC Children's Trust, and a research methods and family support expert, Dr. Artie Maharaj of the REMC, for feedback. In addition, the organizational leadership identified in Needs Assessment: Part 2 will be re-engaged for feedback. The update will include initial goals, aspirations, priorities, barriers, and responses to ACF key domains and questions with updates, progress made, and additional needs identified.

Strong and effective state-level systems, including quality rating and improvement systems and data warehouses, facilitate effective regional and local work; however, ideas and implementation at the local level are often the drivers of progress. REMC, with input from the IHE Collaborative, will work with First Steps to facilitate local (county level) needs assessments using common strategies and tools, mirroring the state-level Needs Assessment process as appropriate. Each First Steps partnership is required by state funding to conduct a needs

assessment and strategic planning process every three years. A planning stage will occur in Year 2 that seeks input from First Steps partnerships. REMC will provide training and the implementation of common, well-designed instruments in Years 3 and 4. REMC will review these plans to determine commonalities and differences in needs and identify areas for further review.

To connect the Needs Assessment, Strategic Plan, and performance evaluation plan, the co-leads of the IHE Collaborative (Clemson University and University of South Carolina) will work with Activity 2 and Activity 6 leadership, particularly related to identifying and studying feasibility of state-level and local-level indicators of quality related to Strategic Plan goals. Finally, the Needs Assessment team will work with the leads of Activities 3, 4, and 5 to consult on program-level evaluation techniques, identify how programs/strategies relate to the needs, and explore options for measurable indicators to be used in a performance evaluation based on state Data Warehouse and/or other data availability.

**Family Engagement**

Local First Steps partnerships, local coalitions, and advocacy organizations like PASOs (state advocacy organization serving Latino communities) and Family Connection (state Child Find) were committed to recruiting families to participate in the initial Needs Assessment. Families who are or have been served by the state's mixed delivery system, and non-participating families who have either tried and failed to find a program or service that met their needs, had to drop out due to one or more barriers (transportation, hours of operation, etc.), were unaware of available services, or opted out altogether contributed to the Needs Assessment and helped to shape priorities for the Strategic Plan. That work will continue in Years 2-4.

**Outcomes and Milestones**

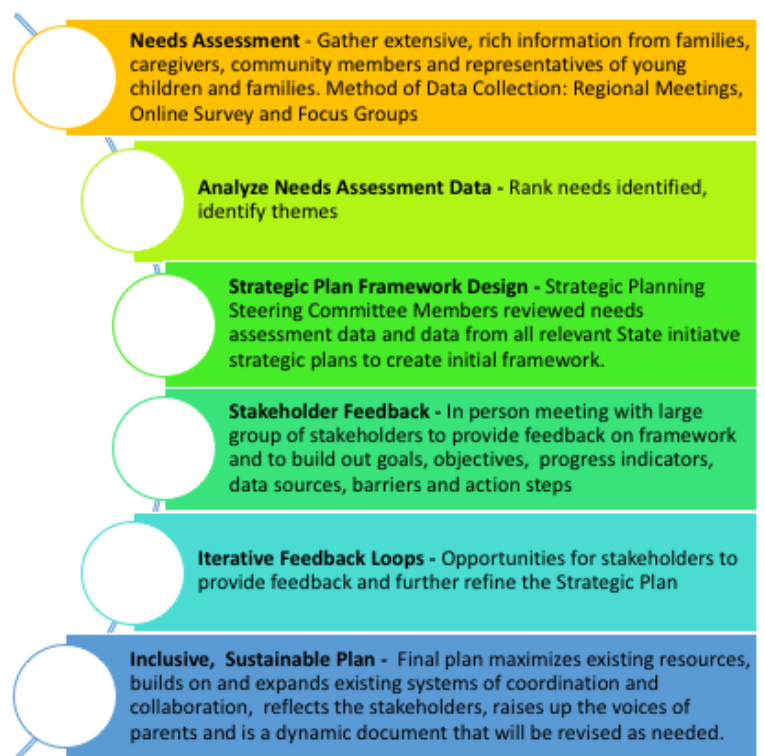Outcomes and milestones are described on Page 3 Project Outcomes and Page 60 Milestones and Timelines.

## ACTIVITY TWO: PDG B-5 STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN

**Description and Evidence of Development of Strategic Plan**

The PDG B-5 Strategic Plan was submitted November 2, 2019 and is based on input from each of SCs child serving agencies and families and child serving professionals in each of SC's 46 counties. The graphic outlines the Strategic Plan development process and indicates SC's commitment to having the plan be a living document that will change with changing needs identified by families, child serving agencies, and ECE child serving professionals. The comprehensive Needs Assessment process described in Activity 1 provided the foundation of the Strategic Plan structure. That foundation was further



**Needs Assessment** - Gather extensive, rich information from families, caregivers, community members and representatives of young children and families. Method of Data Collection: Regional Meetings, Online Survey and Focus Groups

**Analyze Needs Assessment Data** - Rank needs identified, identify themes

**Strategic Plan Framework Design** - Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members reviewed needs assessment data and data from all relevant State initiatve strategic plans to create initial framework.

**Stakeholder Feedback** - In person meeting with large group of stakeholders to provide feedback on framework and to build out goals, objectives, progress indicators, data sources, barriers and action steps

**Iterative Feedback Loops** - Opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and further refine the Strategic Plan

**Inclusive, Sustainable Plan** - Final plan maximizes existing resources, builds on and expands existing systems of coordination and collaboration, reflects the stakeholders, raises up the voices of parents and is a dynamic document that will be revised as needed.

enhanced based on information gathered from a review of the Strategic Plans of each child serving agency and organization that supports families with children B-5. Once the initial goals, objectives and indicators were identified and aligned to the findings in the Needs Assessment, the Strategic Plan steering committee hosted an in-person stakeholder meeting for further plan development. The plan was then released to a broad group in accordance with SC's commitment

to open feedback loops. The goals, objectives and indicators in the submitted Strategic Plan represent SC's commitment to strengthening the state's integrated ECE system to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and improve their transitions across early childhood into early elementary grades.

**Ongoing Implementation of the Strategic Plan**

The DECE, First Steps, Strategic Plan Implementation Team (see below) and our PDG Evaluators will monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan's progress indicators, including the collaboration across the mixed delivery system and the continuing engagement of stakeholders including families in updating progress and identification of new needs. The ECAC will support advocacy and policy activities to support the work.

The SC Strategic Plan Implementation Team, composed of the Activity Leads for each strategy, will be convened in late 2019 or early 2020.

- Each Lead(s) will hold regular calls or meetings with their collaborators to work on the strategies and action steps. They will begin by convening a meeting of the Collaborators for their activity to review strategies and action steps and become familiar with the existing resources. They will also review the need for additional collaborators (stakeholders) and the ability of the collaborators to share information and/or participate in the work of implementation. The Leads and Collaborators will revise strategies and action steps as needed. The Leads will communicate to DECE and First Steps (as staff to the ECAC) the gaps in resources and the need for additional resources, project completion dates, identify baseline data for measuring progress, assess the progress indicator data available, and identify the need for additional progress indicator data and a plan for its collection. This will include the identification of MOUs or the need for them

and any regulatory, legislative or policy barriers. The Strategic Plan will be updated based on reports from the Leads.

- Communication will be within each Strategy team and across teams addressing the work to revise and implement the Strategic Plan. This communication framework will be supported by a password protected website to post resources, requests for help and proposed revisions to the plan, as well as quarterly and annual reports from each of the Leads. There will be quarterly in-person meetings for all primary Leads for each strategy convened by DECE and First Steps. These meetings will include the Evaluation Team, who will be collecting data for the formative evaluation and sharing findings.

- Quarterly and annual reports will be shared with the ECAC for the council's review and support in moving forward the policy agenda.

- First Steps and PASOs will convene focus groups of parents biannually to provide an update on the Strategic Plan and collect input for Strategic Plan Implementation Team.

- Annually, DECE and First Steps will utilize the quarterly meetings to work with the Leads and Collaborators to review progress in meeting indicators and to update the Strategic Plan. Updating will include a review of the strategies to assess progress and need for revision or creation of new strategies; the identification of changes in existing resources and need for new resources; and a review of progress indicators and the identification of new or needed progress data. When the Needs Assessment is updated, the annual meeting of the Leads and Collaborators will be used to revise the Strategic Plan.

The regular Needs Assessment updates will engage the same broad range of stakeholders that contributed to the first Needs Assessment using diverse mechanisms to gather input:

geographically dispersed meetings, an online survey and focus groups hosted by the First Steps local partnerships.

**Lessons Learned During Strategic Planning Process and Year 1 Implementation**

The Strategic Plan development process began with a goal for each of the three focus areas identified in the Needs Assessment as highest priorities. During the development of the Strategic Plan, the Planning Team identified the need to create a fourth focus area: *collaboration and coordination to create aligned and effective policies to support children and families* and a goal that SC's ECE stakeholders practice coordination, communication, and collaborative strategies that encourage shared goals, effective use of resources and aligned policies and practices to create unified targeted efforts to support children and families. The overarching lessons learned from the implementation of ALL activities in Year 1 related to time and authentic and meaningful engagement. All of SC's activities represented a commitment to bold but achievable goals, but time for contract implementation and rolling out initiatives was misjudged in almost all cases. While activities have continued to move forward and get on track, launch delays were frustrating. The other lessons learned related to efforts to meaningfully and authentically engage families and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. While we consider our outreach efforts to be successful, we recognize that hard to reach perspectives and priority populations are still not fully engaged. A major priority in Year 2 is to continue our efforts to meet our targeted audiences where they are and to utilize individually and culturally appropriate practices to engage in conversations that will continue to inform and perhaps change our work.

Some regulatory barriers and roadblocks were identified in the planning process and are noted in the Strategic Plan. For example, one of the barriers to families being able to access well

child visits is Medicaid transportation policies. An action step is to develop and support a policy change that will expand those services. A part of the Strategic Plan Implementation Team's work will be to continue to identify regulatory barriers and roadblocks and propose action steps to address them.

**Inclusion, Incorporation and Alignment of Comprehensive Support Services**

South Carolina is using both the objectives in the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan implementation process to incorporate and align comprehensive support services. The Strategic Plan implementation process creates implementation teams that include representatives from all relevant organizations and agencies to address the objectives. For example, to implement Objective 2.3, "Increase mental health promotion, prevention and intervention services and supports for children birth through five and families" the Lead agencies are SC Infant Mental Health Association and DECE. Collaborators include the SC Dept. of Mental Health, SC DSS Child Welfare, SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control (DHEC), Therapeutic Child Care Program directors, and Child Advocacy Centers. Their resources include the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina (the State's Health Improvement Plan), the Be Well Care Well program, the SC Program for Infant Toddler Care, and Attachment Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC), a home-based intervention.

South Carolina's Mission for its B-5 System is to "Improve the capacity of the existing system to better serve children and families, especially those most vulnerable, in a continuum of B-5 programs and services that result in successful *transition* all the way to elementary school and increase the overall participation of children in the ECE mixed delivery system."

**How is SC Spending Money Differently?**

As a result of the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, SC is spending both money and staff time in different ways, most significantly in cross-agency collaborative efforts. While the state has a long history of interagency work, the efforts have been narrow in scope and/or limited to planning and study vs. implementation. Over the past year, SC used initial PDG funds to staff its ECAC, create shared identities and portals, strengthen partnerships with system navigators, pilot transition strategies, and build a foundation for integrated data efforts, all while implementing the grant as a collaborative effort across multiple state agencies. Years 2-4 will see common portals, eligibility screeners, and applications come to fruition; shared referral processes for better case management across programs; braided (CCDF, Head Start, and state) funding to increase access to high-quality ECE programs; increased access to evidence-based parenting and transition supports; a statewide infrastructure for early childhood mental health supports and parent leadership; and the launch of a true B-5 integrated data system that will support better decision-making at state and local levels.

Due to a lack of quality child care in rural areas, funding will be used to identify rural programs where there is space to expand capacity and align with other funding sources. SC has begun to identify current Head Start programs in rural areas that have available classroom space. Resources will be infused into these programs to open classrooms to serve additional infants and toddlers in these quality programs. Alignment is also being made to current 4K child care providers with ABC Quality to fund contracted slots for infant/toddlers to provide for greater efficiencies and continuity of care for children and families.

## ACTIVITY THREE: MAXIMIZING PARENT AND FAMILY KNOWLEDGE, CHOICE, AND ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SC's 2019 B-5 Needs Assessment findings includes direct input from nearly 2,000 parents of children 0-5 and strongly supports increased investments in maximizing parent and family knowledge, choice, and engagement in their children's early learning and development. Qualitatively, all studied
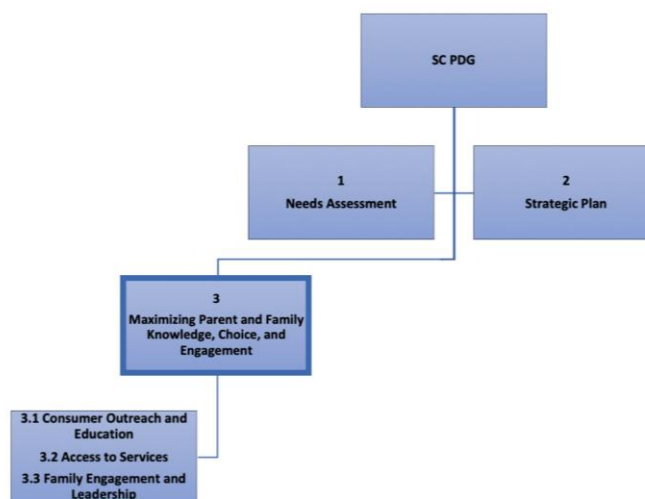


populations within the Needs Assessment (early learning providers, parents/caregivers, and community members) rank this area as both critically important and a significant barrier. Quantitatively, SC's low levels of demonstrated readiness on the KRA in Fall 2018 (37%), underutilization of services (unused slots for publicly funded preschool and WIC and declining enrollments for IDEA Part C and IDEA Part B 619), and scarcity of quality child care, evidence-based parenting services, and supports for families who speak English as a second language and/or have children with disabilities speak to the need for a comprehensive approach. It is no coincidence, therefore, that many of the strategies contained in SC's 2019 B-5 Strategic Plan aim to increase family knowledge, choice and engagement, particularly among vulnerable and underserved populations.

SC's PDG Renewal Grant funding request is designed to continue the state's progress from Year 1 on developing a **"**no wrong door" policy and infrastructure for family access to services and resources, including creating coordinated application and enrollment processes among the state's mixed delivery system and other support services (Bonus Point 1) and ensuring

families are knowledgeable of the options and transition processes that will support their child's individual progress and developmental needs (Bonus Point 3). To that end, the state will: 1. continue its development of shared identities and portals (First Five SC, Palmetto PreK, SCChildcare.org); and 2. continue increasing capacity among the state's network of system navigators (PASOs, Family Connection, Help Me Grow, SC Thrive, public schools and local First Steps partnerships). Years 2-4 will also include new activities to support the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, including: 3. expanding and coordinating multiple, inter-connected public education initiatives, including evidence-based home visiting and parent support programs, to increase knowledge of child development and available resources; and 4. expanding the state's network for engagement, advocacy and leadership among families and community stakeholders, building on the success of the state's B-5 Needs Assessment process.

**Partnerships to Ensure Each and Every Family is Informed & Connected to Services**

**Shared Identity and Common Portals** **(3.1 Existing/Expanded) -** SC will continue development and implementation of a shared identity campaign and common access portals for the state's B-5 and mixed delivery systems in order to support parent choice, knowledge, and engagement. With initial (Year 1) PDG funding, South Carolina's B-5 system has made significant progress with developing shared access portals for services. The state's existing vendor for its consumer education portal (Mad Monkey) conducted several months of audience discovery research and brand development, as well as convened monthly work groups of agency partners and system navigator organizations to ensure that portals: a) are designed with the needs of families in mind; b) encompass the entire B-5 system; and c) complement but not duplicate existing portals and resources. *First Five South Carolina* was adopted by the ECAC in August 2019 as the state's unified, comprehensive early childhood B-5 identity campaign and web

application portal. The "Five" within the name refers not only to a child's first five years but also the five categories of services within the portal: Child Care & Early Education, Health & Safety, Special Needs & Early Intervention, Food & Nutrition, and Parenting & Family Support. Year 1 created the portal identity, which will be developed in Year 2 (2020) for deployment in Year 3 along with a promotional campaign of traditional and grassroots marketing. Plans are underway to include, as portal features:

- **Help Me Grow (3.2 New) – See Bonus Points.**

- **SC Thrive Common Application/Eligibility (3.2 New)** - The state is fortunate to have SC Thrive, the state's largest nonprofit system navigator with more than 400 partner locations. Its "ThriveHub" platform currently offers both direct application and client data sharing to SNAP, TANF, Medicaid and other public health benefits, and tax credits, with plans to expand to SC Voucher and WIC. SC Thrive will collaborate with First Five SC to build and implement a common application for B-5 services (see Bonus Points).

- Integration with related portals for ECE services: Palmetto PreK, begun in Year 1 (see below), and SCChildcare.org, the state's existing consumer education portal.

- Links to the state's existing and proposed network of family support resources, ranging in intensity from universal parenting information to more targeted supports such as developmental screenings and evidence-based parenting programs.

- A robust strategic print, broadcast, billboard, and online marketing campaign to promote the use of portal resources, including both earned and paid media and in partnership with the state's public radio and television network, SCETV.

- Feedback through user surveys and website analytics to advise policy makers on what parents, system navigators, participant organizations, and other system users want and what they think of the services provided.

Market research, as well as findings from the Needs Assessment, recognized the need for a related branding and messaging campaign specifically for the state's ECE programs targeting three- and four-year-old children. SC's complex mixed delivery system includes, in addition to child care subsidy and Head Start, three separate state funding streams for 4K across two agencies (SCDE and SC First Steps) and PreK programs funded by 79 school districts using non-state funds. Representatives from all partners collaborated with Mad Monkey to create the Palmetto PreK identity (SC's nickname is the Palmetto State) and a comprehensive direct mail, print, broadcast, and online campaign that will launch in late 2019 for the 2020-21 school year. The Palmetto PreK portal will also launch in late 2019 and will include a program eligibility calculator; program locator with multiple options (transportation, extended day/year options, services for younger children at same location, etc.) and a common initial application sent electronically to whichever program(s) the parent chooses. 2020-21 will be a pilot year to assess how well the portal and joint application works. It is the state's intent in Years 2-4 to collaborate with data integration efforts to add portal features such as a common application via SC Thrive and real-time vacancy information.

**ECE System Navigators** (**3.2 Existing/Expanded**) will be engaged both within and outside the state's B-5 System to support families of children B-5, particularly those most vulnerable, in supporting their child's development and accessing services they need. B-5 system navigators will be identified and trained, and capacity expanded in areas identified by the state's Needs Assessment, to support parent knowledge and choice regarding services to support their

children 0-5 and to provide feedback on family and system needs to inform the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan.

"Build it and they will come" will NOT be the motto of SC's B-5 system. Critical to the success of the state's Strategic Plan is ensuring all families, including those traditionally underserved and those living in state-defined rural areas, have the support they need to access needed services. System navigators, both front-line staff and independent navigator organizations, must be invested in supporting Activity 3 initiatives. SC is home to several state-level system navigator organizations, including CCR&R, SC Thrive, United Way 211, Help Me Grow, PASOs, and Family Connection. The state also benefits from local-level navigators including public schools, libraries, museums, community and faith-based organizations, and state-supported, nonprofit First Steps partnership organizations in every county. To support community resources for families with young children, First Steps will coordinate a new network of the state's many family support centers so that SC can benefit from the National Family Support Network's best practices standards and resources.

In Year 1, ECE system navigators were identified and consulted in the development of unified portals and campaigns, and pilot initiatives were launched to increase capacity within navigator organizations targeting highly vulnerable populations: PASOs (Latino families) and Family Connection (families with children with, or at risk of, a disability or developmental delay). Now that the ECAC has adopted a shared identity for the state's B-5 system, partner agencies will develop an online orientation program to provide "superuser" training to front-line staff, navigator organizations to include CCR&R, SC Thrive locations, and family resource centers about what types of resources there are, how to use First Five and associated portals, and

particularly for front-line staff, how to help families who need services but aren't a fit for their program get access to all that is needed to support their child's potential.

A key partner in engaging the state's public schools as navigator organizations will be the SC School Improvement Council (the state's federal Family Engagement Center grantee), which has agreed to develop and disseminate B-5 training into its support for evidence-based family engagement, including how schools can help families with young children find the services they need and support successful transitions into kindergarten (see Activity 4).

**WIC Promotion** **(3.2 New)** - Brought out through the B-5 needs assessment and the Children's Trust's Child Well-Being Coalition work over the past 18 months is the underutilization of public nutrition supports for children 0-5, in particular WIC. SC's overall WIC coverage rate is 46.4% vs. 54.5% nationwide, and the state has one of the lowest utilization rates for children in the nation, just 31.9% (USDA, 2016). The state's WIC office, housed at DHEC, has recently made significant improvements but there remain several areas of need, including promotion of WIC at the local level, long wait times for WIC certification and nutrition classes, and lack of incentives to encourage retention once infants wean off formula. Years 2-4 funding will support a pilot program within one DHEC region that will certify local family support providers to deliver WIC-approved nutrition education, provide retention incentives for families and fund local First Steps partnerships to promote WIC and increase local access to WIC-certified nutrition classes.

**Plans to Ensure Family Concerns are Elicited and Responded to and Families with**

**Concerns Related to Development or a Child's Special Need are Informed of IDEA**

**Services and Connected to Resources**

Years 2-4 activities will include increasing the capacity of system navigators to serve families with concerns about their child's development (Help Me Grow – see Bonus Points); families who need knowledge, service options, and transition supports for their children with disabilities (Family Connection); and Latino families whose language barrier and fear of accessing public services make their children more likely to go without needed interventions (PASOs).

**Family Connection** (**3.3 Existing/Expanded**) - Families who have children with disabilities and/or special healthcare needs face multiple challenges with transitioning across programs and into elementary school. Family Connection of SC has extensive system navigator experience with this population as the state's USDOE Parent Training and Information Center, HRSA Family-to-Family Health Information Center, Parent-to-Parent USA affiliate, and the contracted Child Find organization for IDEA Part C. Initial PDG funding piloted, and renewal funds will continue the expansion of Family Connection's peer-to-peer parent support model, Education Partners, to the state's underserved northeast ("Pee Dee") region, containing SC's 3rd largest school district and surrounding less-populated areas. Education Partners trains experienced parents of children with disabilities to help parents of young children understand their rights and responsibilities and develop their self-advocacy skills related to their child's transition process from Part C to B 619 and then into kindergarten. Grant funds will also increase the availability of evidence-based parent trainings targeting children with disabilities (Stepping Stones Triple P and other models) in underserved areas, in English and Spanish, including among foster, adoptive,

military, and kinship care parents and caregivers; disseminate transition toolkits and related materials; offer screenings and supports via text, print, online and social media; and provide leadership development and advocacy training for parents.

**PASOs' Connections for Child Development (CCD)** **(3.2 Existing/Expanded) -** is an early identification and referral model that addresses the specific health and education needs of Latino families with young children. Bilingual Community Health Workers (CHWs) conduct home visits to identify early developmental concerns through ASQ3 and ASQ:SE2 screenings; help parents select an appropriate home-based educational or early intervention goal; and support the family with information and resources.

**BeginningsSC** **(3.2 New) -**This new initiative is designed to increase awareness and provide support to families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing as they transition through the system (Part C to Part B619 to Kindergarten)

**Baby Coach Part C Transition** **(3.2 New) -** This Activity will pilot the development of a protocol, referral system, and resource materials for a NICU transition program in collaboration with Part C.

**Improving Family Engagement: Supporting parent knowledge of child development**

SC will effectively utilize both existing and expanded parent and caregiver education resources to meet the unique knowledge, choice, and engagement needs of parents, families and caregivers. According to the Needs Assessment, too many parents and family members are not getting the information they need to support their child's development and education. Several program models and resources exist for families, ranging from universal promotion to intensive home visitation and mental health services, but they are not well-known and the more intensive programs have limited access. Based on Needs Assessment findings, the Strategic Plan proposes

to a) make existing parent and family education resources more coordinated and accessible via the First Five SC portal and collaborations with community partners, and b) increase access to underserved portions of the state, particularly less-populated areas and areas with high numbers of families in Family Preservation Services needing access to community resources.

**Expansion of Parents as Teachers and other EB Models** **(3.2 New)** - Only 3% of the 263,300 eligible families in SC currently have the opportunity to participate in evidence-based home visiting programs. Fortunately, local assets exist in both urban and rural counties to expand evidence-based parent support programs, including home visitation, through local First Steps partnerships (37 of 46 fund at least one evidence-based model) and the presence of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) state office within SC First Steps. PAT in SC has a longstanding reputation for quality, consistently exceeding the national average for PAT affiliates on nearly all of the model's essential requirements, and First Steps' external evaluation of PAT in 2016 found strong and increasing levels of model fidelity, positive parenting outcomes, and kindergarten literacy readiness. Years 2-4 funding will expand local access to PAT and other evidence-based programs to at least 500 additional children 0-5 by the end of Year 3, as well as providing additional technical assistance and monitoring support at the state level.

**First Five SC Portal** **(3.1 Existing/Expanded)** - As a single source of information on programs and services, the First Five SC portal will provide parental guidance information featuring the state's existing network of services (~~Palmetto Basics~~, Text4Baby, Ready Rose, etc.). Important resources that will be included in the B-5 system portal will be a family-friendly guide to recently adopted Early Learning Standard, developmental milestones and checklists, free ASQ3 and ASQ:SE2 screening tools, and information about managing key transitions.

**Current and Proposed Activities to Learn from and Inform Families**

**2 Generation/Parent Leadership** (**3.3 New**) will create peer-to-peer networks across the state's B-5 system that support information exchange and the development of leadership and advocacy skills among families, in order to provide feedback to the state's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan and to inform improvements in two-generation policies within public programs. Opportunities to build parent leadership and advocacy are interwoven throughout South Carolina's PDG renewal application. Local First Steps partnership boards, School Improvement Councils, Head Start Policy Councils, and Children's Trust Parent Councils all lift up the voices of parents of young children.

Parent and family voice must not only be shared, but made actionable with state policy makers, particularly in re-examining public benefit programs using a 2Gen, or whole family, lens. PDG funding would establish a 2Gen Coordinator within the ECAC This position would examine and make recommendations to agency directors for needed policy changes within and across agencies and funding streams to support whole family approaches to services.

## ACTIVITY FOUR: SHARING BEST PRACTICES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

To ensure that services provided to support young children and families are high quality, best practice calls for care of the professionals delivering those services. Two different levels of workforce support are included in this proposal: one that attends to the well-being of child care providers; and one focused on the professionals who support child care providers and other child- and family-serving sectors.
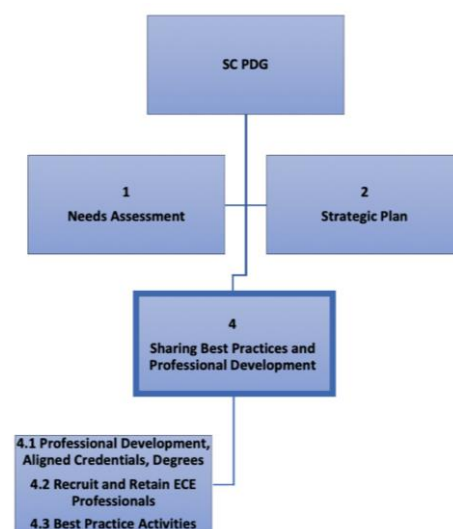
**Current and Proposed Professional Development Activities/Efforts to Improve the Training and Experience of B-5 ECE Providers**

The Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) is the professional development entity for the early childhood workforce in South Carolina. Five components of CCCCD contribute to the overall foundation of SC's professional development system and the enrichment of ECE teachers: the Professional Development Registry, the SC Child Care Training System, Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) system, SC Early Care and Education Credentialing System, and the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program. The current professional development activities being proposed and/or enhanced with PDG funding support the capacity building and educational attainment of current or new ECE provider professionals and child serving professionals, including those in the home visitation and mental health fields, working to support children B-5.

**Home Visitors Competency Framework for Direct Service Professionals (4.3 Existing/Expanded) -** A key challenge of the family support workforce is access to quality, ongoing professional development. Using Year 1 PDG funding, Children's Trust (convener of the state's Home Visiting Consortium) procured the online learning management system for the National Family Support Competency Framework for Direct Service Professionals, a shared model of competencies and skills that all home visitors share, developed by the Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals and endorsed by Zero to Three and the Technical Assistance Coordination Center for Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visitor Program (MIECHV). Workforce members, regardless of location, can take an initial assessment and select training modules based on their needs, towards eventual certification across 10 competency domains. Programs will be able to track the progress of their workforce members and the

Children's Trust will provide financial incentives for completing the credential, and on behalf of the Consortium will collect feedback from the workforce on usage and user satisfaction in order to improve the system.

**Palmetto PreK Jamboree (4.1 Existing/Expanded) -** Coordinated by First Steps, the interagency Palmetto PreK team redirected Year 1 funding to host the state's largest-ever shared professional development event for preschool teachers: the Palmetto PreK Jamboree, attended by hundreds of public school, child care, and Head Start teachers at no cost to them. Key to the event's success was bringing the workforce together to learn about one another's programs, build relationships, and find strength in their common purpose. Years 2-4 will expand the Jamboree to multiple times annually (fall, spring, and summer) and increasing the number of locations from three to five to support teachers from rural areas. Content will focus on best practices for early learning across domains, with special emphasis on social emotional learning and trauma-informed instruction, supporting children with disabilities, cultural competency and equity, and facilitating successful transitions across programs and into kindergarten. Palmetto PreK will provide logistical support for in-person events and also support shared learning and workforce development via the state's public broadcasting network **(SCETV 4.1 New),** online content and social media (palmettoprek.org).

**Baby Jam: Infant/Toddler Seminar Series (4.1 New)** – Building on the success of Palmetto PreK's Jamboree, SCIMHA will create a specialized Infant/Toddler Seminar Series for Early Head Start and child care teachers and directors serving children ages 0-3. A series of two-day summits will be held in four regions of the state to provide deep-dive learning experiences focused on essential aspects of infant/toddler care. National experts who are rarely accessible to

in-the-field child care providers, will present on topics of particular relevance and impact to the caregivers of infants and toddlers.

        <u>**Individualized Practice-based Coaching Paired with Training**</u> **(4.1 New)** is a well-established best practice for professional development that cultivates more meaningful practice changes in the classroom than training alone. In April 2020, the CCCCD workforce registry will provide Technical Assistance Providers an improved platform to document technical assistance (TA) within child care programs. ECE providers will be able to locate programs that offer technical assistance and coaching by utilizing the registry features. In addition, CCCCD is pursuing program updates and policies that will allow for the provision of continuing education training credit for technical assistance. Combining training with TA has long been considered most effective to improve practice. Documenting TA for required training hours will afford an additional incentive to providers and programs who utilize TA.

**Current and Proposed Best Practice Activities**

        <u>**Be Well Care Well**</u> **(4.3 Existing /Expanded) -** is a program developed two years ago by the SC Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) in response to the growing evidence that stress and depression are widespread in the ECE workforce and negatively impact the experience of the young children in the classroom. The pilot program provides child care providers with opportunities to set well-being goals, build community, and work with a BWCW Coach who supports their well-being goal achievement. An evaluation of the BWCW pilot shows the intervention has a meaningful impact in the well-being of child care providers and improves the social-emotional climate in their classrooms. An expansion of this pilot to reach a wider audience is proposed in this application.

**Increasing Knowledge & Support for EC Policy** **(4.3 Existing/Expanded)** - The SC Education Policy Fellows Program (SC-EPFP) is a part of a nationally respected leadership development program affiliated with the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. The program is coordinated by the DOE Office of School Leadership and the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC). Through Year 1 funding, the ECAC Manager and four other state and local program administrators are currently participating in an ECE SC-EPFP focused pilot in 2019-20 and providing feedback as to its effectiveness. Additionally, the ECAC Manager is collaborating with the SC-SIC on its work creating a fellowship program for parents, a deliverable within the SC-SIC's Federal Family Engagement Center grant, as a possible addition to the Early Childhood Policy Fellows Program.

**Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)** **(4.3 Existing/Expanded)** – see Bonus Points.

**Expansion of South Carolina Inclusion Specialists** **(4.3, 3.3 Existing/Expanded)** - The SC Inclusion Collaborative (SCIC) will increase the number of Inclusion Specialists available to provide individualized training and technical assistance for child care providers to support the inclusion of children with disabilities/developmental delays. Inclusion Specialists work directly with child care staff and program administrators to increase the use of evidence-based practices that lead to access and meaningful participation for all children.

**Developing or Enhancing Aligned Credentials, Certifications and Coursework**

CCCCD continues to award the SC Early Care & Education Credentials by partnering with all 16 Technical Colleges in SC. Each technical college offers the early childhood courses necessary for individuals to advance their academic education. CCCCD will continue to work closely with the 16 technical colleges to ensure the credential courses are offered and will continue to promote articulation efforts within higher education institutions.

**Increased Availability of Qualified Providers**

In order to increase families' access to qualified child care providers, particularly providers who serve infants and toddlers, South Carolina intends to incentivize the establishment of new family child care providers (see Activity 5). In this section, we address an added incentive for the newly recruited family child care providers, aimed at ensuring the providers are delivering quality care.

FCC Community of Practice (**4.2 New**) - All newly recruited family child care providers will become part of a formal Community of Practice (COP) in which they will partner together with a trained COP facilitator from CCR&R to meet QRIS standards. FCC peers from within a community will meet monthly as a group to discuss challenges and strategies to meeting the ABC Quality Standards. The CCR&R COP facilitator will also make site visits to each participating family child care provider between group meetings to offer technical assistance, and coordinate with other FCC supports including local PAT programs (see Activity 5.1).

Pyramid Model Trainer Community of Practice (CoP) (New 4.1) - Expand on year 1 PDG to provide program-wide Pyramid Model Implementation and design a Community of Practice for trainers. Work in collaboration with IECMH initiative and State Pyramid Model team to help provide support to the network. Begin a pilot to implement the Pyramid Model with Law Enforcement to expand to new partners to reduce trauma and build protective factors for young children and their families

In addition to efforts aimed at recruiting new child care providers to the field, we intend to take steps to retain existing child care providers. While fully addressing earning a wage that reflects the importance of this work is beyond the scope of this grant, we propose incentives and

alternatives to monetary support that can slow turnover rates and encourage professional knowledge and skill building experiences:

- **Smart Money** **(4.2 Existing/Expanded)** - Currently, upon earning any of the credentials issued by CCCCD, qualified teachers who work in an early childhood program are eligible for a Smart Money bonus. CCCCD will increase the award amount to further incentivize providers and enhance the wage earnings of teachers.

- **Career Ladder Placement** **(4.2 CCDF Funded)** - CCCCD is in the process of expanding SC's career ladder to incorporate additional academic accomplishments. Placement on the new career ladder will allow the workforce registry to obtain important data regarding the education of the early care and education workforce. To incentivize individuals to complete their registry profile, CCCCD will offer a bonus to individuals who obtain career ladder placement.

- **T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Retention Bonus** **(4.2 Existing/Expanded)** - The T.E.A.C.H. model allows ECE providers an opportunity to attend any of the 16 technical colleges to further enhance their academic education. CCCCD will pursue a model to provide additional wages via bonuses to motivate providers to continue academic advancements and provide a monetary supplement for those providers who remain within the ECE field, thereby decreasing turnover within programs.

**Interdisciplinary Professional Development -Higher Education Multi-Disciplinary Degree Programs: Infusing Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Principles**

**IECMH Multidisciplinary Course Content** **(4.1 New)** **-** Basic principles of infant and early childhood mental health are foundational to understanding the impact of early relational experiences on long-term development. For that reason, it is important that all professionals who

interact with very young children and their families have, at minimum, a foundational understanding of IECMH principals. This pediatricians, child welfare case workers, police, and judges to child care providers, home visitors, and nurses. This initiative will promote varied levels of infusion of IECMH principles into various degree programs at higher education institutions across the state. The extent of IECMH content embedded in each degree program will be varied based on the level of engagement the typical workforce generated from that degree program has with very young children and their families. Leaders from 2- and 4-year institutions will be convened to first learn about the critical importance of healthy social-emotional development (i.e. IECMH), and then to work together to create IECMH content that is appropriate for their particular area of study.

**SCDOE Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment (Part B 619)** **(4.3 New) -** As Part C expands number of children served by approximately 1,500 children daily, all of these young children and their families will be entitled to a transition meeting and eligibility determination of services.  To ensure compliance with timely transition from Part C to B will develop infrastructure to offer training and materials to conduct the Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment as teams of professionals at the school district level to evaluate multiple children at one time to provide more efficient practice.

**Expansion of Inclusion SCIC / Itinerant Course Content** **(New 4.1)** - with collaboration with DOE will develop and implement a cluster of courses to prepare early childhood special education teachers and district administrators to implement an itinerant model as part of their continuum of services for preschool children with disabilities. Also provide training and TA to ECE faculty at 2- and 4- year Institutions of Higher Education.

**Beginnings SC – Hearing Screenings** **(4.1 New) -** Professional Development will be provided to Local Education Agencies to conduct hearing screenings to streamline the preschool Child Find process in collaboration with the DOE's Part B 691 and DHHS's Part C.

**Interdisciplinary Learning Community** **(4.1 New)** - A hallmark of effective supports and resources for very young children and their families is coordination, common language, and shared understanding among child- and family-serving entities. The SC Infant Mental Health Association (SCIMHA) is leading interdisciplinary work focused on children B-5 in the state through cross-disciplinary professional development and learning experiences. With PDG funds, SCIMHA will further this cross-disciplinary learning with a focus on the 0-3 period, by facilitating a cross-disciplinary learning community made up of professionals from multiple child- and family-serving workforce sectors. Additionally, SCIMHA will bring training on the DC:0-5, Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood. Despite the clinical name, the training is designed for professionals from all disciplines serving children B-5 and it focuses on both the promotion and prevention end of the infant and early childhood mental health spectrum as well as the diagnosis and treatment end.

**Tools that allow providers to assess professional strengths and gaps to guide PD**

**CCCCD Professional Development Registry Marketing** **(4.1 Existing/Expanded)** – In Years 2-4, CCCCD will promote ~~the new of~~ its new workforce registry to enhance the tracking capabilities of educational accomplishments of the field. The new system will provide trainers and technical assistance providers a streamlined electronic system to more effectively provide training and TA services to the field, thereby increasing the number of child care providers who have professional development supports needed for quality care. The enhanced system provides users with the ability to access a professional development plan, assess their own professional

strengths and gaps, and use as a guide to seek training and coaching opportunities aligned with their individual professional development goals.

**Outreach and Information Sharing**

Outreach and information with families and among partners will be a central component of the work proposed in this grant. To ensure that the onus of responsibility for connecting services to fill multiple needs does not fall on families and caregivers, information exchange sessions will be held for partners to increase the knowledge of services and programs each partner offers, understand eligibility and enrollment procedures, and identify the appropriate point person within each partner organization to contact for more information.

**School Improvement Council/Family Engagement Centers Transition Supports** (**4.3 Existing/Expanded**) - In addition to piloting CTK in other areas of the state, elementary schools in SC will be supported in developing evidence-based transition practices throughout B-5 through the state's network of School Improvement Councils (SICs) within every K-12 public school. SC-SIC, a state level organization that provides training and support to SICs, will use its statewide network of elementary school SICs and federal Family Engagement Centers to continue Year 1 work as follows: 1) make resources and materials (including Transition Toolkit developed in Year 1) available to SICs in all elementary schools; 2) provide relevant trainings as requested for SICs to develop activities and supports around transitions; and 3) raise awareness of critical importance of transition from 4K or home to kindergarten with SICs statewide. Evidence-based sources in other program areas such as Head Start will be incorporated in building the repertoire of best practices while aligning transition activities across programs.

## ACTIVITY FIVE: IMPROVING OVERALL QUALITY AND SERVICE INTEGRATION, EXPANDING ACCESS AND DEVELOPING NEW PROGRAMS

ABC Quality (ABCQ), South Carolina's QRIS, provides leadership and support for its child care provider network of regulated child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes as well as exempt centers and family, friend and neighbor care (1,250 providers served as of 9/2019). With a major program revision underway to transition all providers to one assessment tool
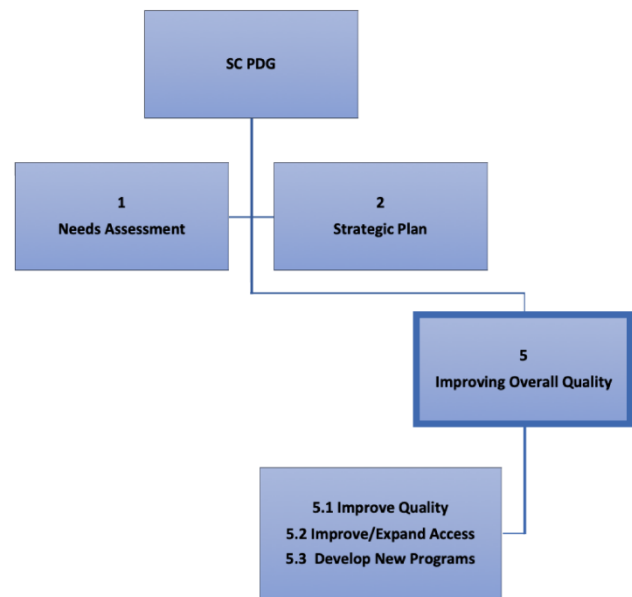


(individualized by program setting) using a CQI approach, SC has critical needs to help providers launch successfully to a system that is more responsive to their needs to improve overall quality and meets the individual needs of the children they serve.

**ECE Provider Support Initiatives to Increase Access and Improve Quality**

**Improving Quality in Family Child Care (FCC) and Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (FFN) through Parents as Teachers (PAT)** (**5.1 Existing/Expanded**) – By their nature, Group and Family child care programs have limited time and resources to attend training, and there is little opportunity for interaction or monitoring with FFN providers receiving voucher subsidy. Using the capacity of 37 existing First Steps Parents as Teachers (PAT) affiliates, located in 28 of 46 counties, the State PAT Office (located at First Steps) will contract for on-site training by the PAT National Office in the Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits supplemental curriculum, whereby parent educators visit care providers twice monthly to support quality caregiver-child interactions. At least 15 PAT-certified parent educators will participate in

the two-day training in November 2019 and enroll one or more care providers within their caseloads by Spring 2020. Parent educators will enter data on providers, visits, screenings, and assessments into the First Steps data system as well as document the training with CCCCD. Both caregivers and PAT affiliate programs will receive financial incentives for successful participation and retention. Based on initial cohort results, a second training will be scheduled for 2022. This initiative will coordinate with activities 5.3 and 4.2.

**Family Child Care Home Initiative** **(5.3 New) -** Activities will include a campaign to identify potential family child care home providers in identified targeted counties with low accessibility. These small counties and less-populated areas may not be able to sustain centers but could sustain small family home businesses. Results from Year 1 to expand the Parents as Teachers (PAT) outreach through First Steps to family, friend and neighbor care as well as family child care home operators will be examined for possible recruits from that initiative. An enrollment grant will be provided to targeted family homes to include materials and equipment necessary to equip a family child care home and consultation about ABC Quality standards will be provided. An initial supply of three contracted slots for a year of service will be provided to each new family child care home which serves children who are low-income and disadvantaged, including children with disabilities and/or experiencing homelessness or other trauma.

**CRAwl (Child Care Ready for All) College of Nursing** **(5.2 New) –** This initiative supports the Expansion of a Nurse Consultant Network. Nurse-led program for child care providers CRAwl (Child Care Ready for All) to address medical needs for children with special health care needs. Also using a nurse-led home visiting program for families of children discharged from NICU/special care nurseries to support families' transitions to homecare and community level resources such as child care.

**Local Support to Improve/Sustain Child Care Quality** (**5.1 New**) - SC is fortunate to have multiple collaborating organizations for supporting child care quality. At the county level, 80% of First Steps local partnerships offer 15 or more hours of in-person certified training annually, and 17 of 46 partnerships offer intensive, on-site support for providers through a Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) strategy, within both urban and non-urban counties. Through QE, participating child care providers receive on-site coaching, consultation and modeling from a CCCCD-certified Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) at least twice monthly, who in partnership with provider staff set quality improvement goals based on baseline Environmental Rating Scale assessments. QE participation typically lasts multiple years (three on average), with regular post-ERS assessments by an independent assessor to check progress. First Steps external evaluation results demonstrate high levels of provider satisfaction with QE services and significant positive changes pre-to-post in classroom environments. Years 2-4 will build capacity within local QE programs to support providers increasing quality levels within the state's QRIS, including: a) providing child care staff with financial incentives for achieving their QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) goals; and b) supporting materials grant funding to providers. QE certified TAPs will also receive their own QIP via regular sessions and observations by a Master Coach and participate in a statewide professional learning community of technical assistance providers, including ongoing training in ERS, PAS (Program Administration Scale), and ABCQ's observational assessment instruments.

**ABCQ and First Steps (FS) Mixed Delivery Initiative/PITC Specialist Expansion**

(**5.2 New**) - FS has successfully opened 214 4K classrooms in 190 child care centers that participate in ABCQ. 4K classrooms have expanded the state's reach to serve targeted 4-year-olds in private facilities that primarily meet the needs of working families. In many cases,

however, the centers struggle to provide the comparable level of high-quality service for the children 3 and under. To maximize services to the target population prior to eligibility for 4K, ABCQ through SC Voucher will provide contracted slots over a three-year period accompanied by a materials/equipment grant for each eligible classroom and will provide technical assistance by a SC PITC specialist to increase the quality in the under-3 classrooms. During the first year, up to three classrooms per center serving children under 3 will undergo a "makeover" to better meet the new ABCQ program standards with the use of new materials and equipment under the guidance of a SC PITC specialist. A year of technical assistance and training will be provided by SC PITC to those classrooms. During the first year SC Voucher will provide up to 10 contracted slots with CCDF funding to each center to serve children who meet the same or similar eligibility for 4K and meet SC Voucher eligibility. After the first year, the classrooms will continue to receive technical assistance from the SC PITC specialist on a reduced visit schedule to maintain the quality level achieved. The objective is that the 3-year-olds will transition into the 4K classroom prepared to make the most out of their 4K experience and to transition to public kindergarten. For each of the grant funded years, another 10 contracted slots will be provided as children age up. If any children with contracted slots leave before 4K entry, the slot(s) remain with the center for the center to fill with another eligible child of that age. This plan allows the center to absorb the programmatic changes with ongoing support from SC PITC and could leverage change for more classrooms to include the center matching the changes in other classrooms or having local resources underwrite other classroom "makeovers".

**ABCQ and Head Start (HS) Mixed Delivery Initiative (5.2 New) -** ABCQ will pilot the exploration of unused classroom spaces in operating Head Start grantees for the use of those spaces to provide child care services in geographical areas that have low accessibility. ABCQ

will seek and identify HS programs to operate child development services in their unused classrooms with contracted slots provided by SC Voucher. This initiative maximizes the use of existing buildings and resources and experienced high-quality providers to meet local needs and promotes the possible sharing of resources to meet common needs.

**ECE Infrastructure Supports to Improve Quality**

**ABCQ Enrollment Promotion Campaign** (5.2 New) **-** Major restructuring of the ABCQ Rating and Improvement System requires ABC Quality to launch a coordinated and comprehensive statewide marketing and communication plan to message to providers, partners and families. A provider toolkit for publicizing ABC enrollment that includes print material, social media tips, press release suggestions, messaging to parents, certificate of quality level will be developed to promote the ABC branding.

**ABCQ Program Support through ECE/Care Coordinators** (5.2 New) - ABCQ will pilot a small team of Care Coordinators (initially two) and a team leader. The team will be responsible for reaching out to non-ABCQ providers and shepherding providers through the ABCQ process, providing training and mentoring on the ABCQ program standards, navigating providers through the resources available to them and in general providing a high level of customer service to ABCQ providers. The focus will be to mentor providers through their first year of enrollment to assure success in navigating the system. For the initial pilot, one care coordinator will be stationed in Greenville and one stationed in Columbia. This pilot will provide them with access to child care licensing, other DECE staff as appropriate, and out-stationed technical assistance partners to increase communication across agencies and across regions.

**ABC Quality Incentives Initiative** (5.1 Existing/Expanded) – All regulated ECE programs with evidence of a history of compliance with SC licensing regulations and Head Start

and other early care and education programs operated by military or tribal programs demonstrating substantial compliance with their regulatory agency are eligible to participate in ABC Quality. To provide incentives for participation in the program, SC will continue the two opportunities begun in the initial PDG grant and include the other incentives proposed in the initial PDG grant for Years 2-4 as follows:

- **Quality Enrollment Awards** are one-time awards incentivizing new ABCQ participation, targeted to areas with low access to quality child care programs.

- **Longevity Quality Awards** are awarded to all programs in ABC Quality based on number of years of participation.

- **Quality Supplement Grants** are time-limited grants that allow programs at all levels to support efforts to increase/maintain quality levels. Awards are based on assessment and particular areas of need, with focus in areas of health and safety and quality improvement.

- **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Grants** allow programs to participate in the CQI process, set goals for completion, and implement changes. CQI grants are specifically linked to expenditures that would support improvements according to their plan. Programs are awarded grants based on successful CQI.

## ACTIVITY SIX: MONITORING, EVALUATION, DATA USE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, GOVERNANCE & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**Data Integration, Management, and Use**

South Carolina's Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA) will house and support the state's **integrated data system (Expansion 6.1)** for children B-5**.** RFA is a neutral state agency with 20 years' experience integrating and matching/unduplicating public health, education, and human services data across agencies and programs. RFA will build upon its legislative authority,

infrastructure, matching and unique identifier assignment process, and privacy and security protocols already in place for the state's Data Warehouse (DW) to create the new B-5 system. The following diagram illustrates the existing and proposed agencies and programs for SC's Integrated B-5 Data System:



Outside of System
Children's Trust of SC
MIECHV*

Head Start and Early Head Start grantees*

Local school district funded PreK and early learning programs*

Non-MIECHV, non-First Steps home visitation programs*

SC Department of Education
K-12 & Public CERDEP 4K enrollment and demographics
Part B 619
KRA Testing*

SC First Steps
Local Partnership Programs (including home visitation)
First Steps 4K* (Private CERDEP 4K)

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
Birth and Death Certificate Data
WIC Nutrition Program*

SC Department of Disabilities & Special Needs

South Carolina Integrated Data System For Children 0-5 (current and proposed) * * * * * * * * * * Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office Health and Demographics

All Payer Hospital Data
Emergency Room Visits
Home Health Care
Hospitalization
Outpatient Surgeries

SC Department of Social Services
Economic Services (SNAP & TANF)
Child Protective Services & Foster Care
Child Care Vouchers
Child Care Licensing
ABC Quality

SC Department of Health and Human Services
Medicaid Paid Claims
Babynet (IDEA Part C)*
State Employees Health Services

* Data currently not included in unduplicated count from Integrated Data System

Initial PDG funding to RFA created a statewide inventory of B-5 programs and data sources, the types of data collected, whether that data already exists in the DW, and the willingness of data owners to participate in an integrated system. Linked and integrated data are currently available in the DW for the following: child care subsidies; SC First Steps local partnerships; state-funded (CERDEP) 4K via public schools and SC First Steps; public primary education K-3; TANF; WIC; Medicaid; and SNAP. These existing partners have current data sharing agreements with RFA - five MOUs, one Mandate, one Contract, one MOA, and one BAA (Business Associate Agreement HIPAA) – and use RFA's matching capabilities on a regular basis to evaluate service utilization and longitudinal impact. Key state decision makers

that currently use the data include agencies and programs, state legislature, and the state's

Education Oversight Committee, an independent agency that evaluates state-funded 4K,

kindergarten readiness, and K-12 programs. At the county level, local First Steps partnerships

use data for their 0-5 community needs assessments and strategic plans. First Steps is required by

state law to evaluate its major programs and overall impact on a five-year cycle, and relies on

partner agencies to authorize RFA to provide both longitudinal K-12 data - such as KRA results,

retention, absenteeism – as well as propensity match cohorts for comparison using Medicaid,

child welfare, and TANF/SNAP data sets.

A critical limitation of existing 0-5 integrated data is not all early learning programs

participate in the current DW. RFA, working with the ECAC as the convening entity for early

childhood data governance, will in Years 2-4 modify existing data sharing agreements and

develop new ones as necessary to add additional partners to the Integrated B-5 Data System,

including Head Start, Early Head Start, IDEA Part C, non-CERDEP funded preschool programs

within school districts, and community-based programs including MIECHV and non-MIECHV

home visitation services. SC's ECE partners have in recent years been planning on multiple

fronts for moving forward with integrated data. Two years ago, RFA and DOE collaborated with

ECE stakeholders to create scprofile.com, a public portal for viewing aggregate demographic and

(duplicated) program enrollment data for children 0-5 at the state and county level. As part of the

Year 1 Needs Assessment, RFA matching protocols identified approximately 299,147

unduplicated 0-5 year-olds receiving services through Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, Child Protective

Services, First Steps, Disabilities and Special Needs services, SC Department of Education

services, Child Care Vouchers, and Health-related services. These data are disaggregated by

race/ethnicity, gender, and county to inform understanding of local-level utilization and service

gaps. Unfortunately, data on the number of unduplicated children awaiting service, as well as

other important questions related to accessibility, utilization, and impact of services, impact of

program quality and professional development on child outcomes, and the transition of children

among services, remain largely unanswered. Years 2-4 PDG work will strengthen the Integrated

B-5 Data System by adding additional stakeholders to RFA's DW and establishing an

infrastructure for data sharing and dissemination among research partners, policy makers,

program administrators, and public stakeholders at both state and local levels in order to evaluate

progress for the Strategic Plan (see Program Performance Evaluation Plan). DOE has also

applied for a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant exclusively to add an "early learning

extension" to its existing CEDS (Common Education Data Standards) longitudinal data

warehouse. First Steps, DECE, and the SC Head Start Collaboration Office all signed on to the

project, which will: 1) assign unique identifiers to children (separate from RFA's identifier) who

participate in publicly funded early care and education services that then follow the child into the

K-12 student information system; and 2) integrate early learning program participation and

assessment data into the child's education record within the CEDS warehouse. PDG funding will

support real-time data sharing, evaluation and case management prior to public school entry and

connect to other data sets within the DW (health, economic services, etc.), and SLDS will

support public school transitions and assess the longitudinal impact of 0-5 services on K-12

outcomes. Both funding streams will support shared data governance efforts (convened by

committees of the ECAC) and ensure products of integrated data are accessible via shared portals

and understood by state and local decision makers, including local Head Start grantees for their

community needs assessments and local First Steps partnerships as county-level conveners of the

early childhood system.

While the above activities will provide a wealth of new integrated data to inform decision making by policy makers, what is most important is that integrated data improve services to children and families. SC Thrive's ThriveHub system, powered by Good Grid, will not only provide the platform for the First Five SC portal's common applications (see Activity 3 and Bonus Points), but also be the means by which, with client consent, service providers can share case management information across agencies and programs. Rather than just providing a warm hand-off referral, ThriveHub's closed loop referral process facilitates dialog among service providers in real time, resulting in improved service coordination and ensuring clients don't fall through the cracks. Good Grid's large API library and Single Sign-on (SSO) technology will allow caseworkers in participating agencies to use ThriveHub seamlessly within their current client systems. Among ThriveHub's many features is a standalone case management data system (CharityTracker), so that smaller service providers have access to a client data system that can, in the future, be added to the state's Integrated B-5 Data System.

Providing recommendations for unifying early childhood data systems is a responsibility of State Advisory Councils, per the Head Start Act. The ECAC, specifically the Interagency Collaboration Committee, will take on the convener role for early childhood data governance in support of RFA's role as the technical home for B-5 integrated data, and in support of the state's proposed SLDS early learning extension project with DOE. SC's SLDS request includes funding to the ECAC (housed at First Steps) for a staff person to oversee and implement a data governance structure, following the Early Childhood Integrated Data System toolkit provided by the US Department of Education.

## MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: SC'S PDG PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PLAN

Throughout the last year, SC utilized an Implementation Science[1] (IS) framework to conduct an evaluation of the first year of activities for the PDG. SC and the three principal investigators will continue to use this framework to provide consistent and reliable feedback to administrative leaders and system stakeholders. Implementing a new activity is difficult. An IS framework provides the necessary structure to actively work towards ensuring that implementation is successful. The IS framework monitors the implementation as it progresses through four stages:

| IS Framework Stages | |
|---|---|
| **Exploration** | Identify the necessary infrastructure elements to support the implementation of PDG |
| **Installation** | Establish competencies and infrastructure that ensure successful implementation |
| **Initial Implementation** | PDG activities are put into practice and made available to target audiences |
| **Full Implementation** | Assess the outcomes, and collect data to support fidelity in monitoring |

The framework also identifies three necessary components of successful implementation: implementation teams; quality and reliable data for feedback loops; and infrastructure supports.[1] Thus, the IS framework is the ideal evaluation framework to guide an in-depth formative and summative evaluation of activities for this grant as it continues. In addition, the formative aspect of an IS framework establishes targeted points in time during the implementation process to pause, assess, and to make changes as needed. This CQI increases the likelihood that the programs will achieve the anticipated outcomes, which will be assessed via the summative evaluation aspect of the IS framework depicted in the logic model (pgs. 65-66).

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[1] Metz, A., Naoom, S.F., Halle, T., & Bartley, L. (2015). An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Service.

During the first year of PDG South Carolina invested significant resources to develop and ensure that the necessary infrastructure for evaluation, monitoring, and feedback are in place. South Carolina formed a core implementation team made up of key personnel and stakeholders who routinely met to review progress utilizing quality data gathered during the first year of PDG, as well as activity specific teams. Data from the first year shows that all activities are progressing through the stages, albeit on different time frames. By design of the PDG, the majority of activities moved through the exploration and installation stages of the process during the first year of the grant. During that time period they planned for implementation, formed implementation teams specific to the activity, solidified communication strategies, conducted needs assessments, identified data sources, and developed the necessary supportive infrastructure for activities in the initial and full implementation stages. The proposed evaluation plan builds on the infrastructure built during the first year (Figure 1).
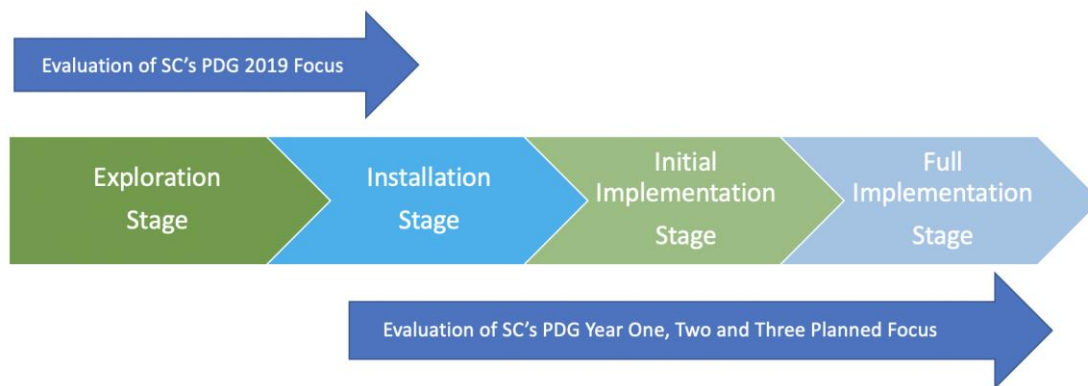


*Figure 1. Implementation Evaluation Timeline*

**Methodology and Metrics**

South Carolina's vision for its B-5 system identified in the new South Carolina's B-5 Strategic Plan is, *We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.* The logic model and strategic plan explains how the inputs, target audiences, activities and outcomes of this proposal are linked to meet South Carolina's vision for the system. The performance

evaluation is designed to monitor ongoing activities and the progress toward the project goals and objectives outlined in the logic model.
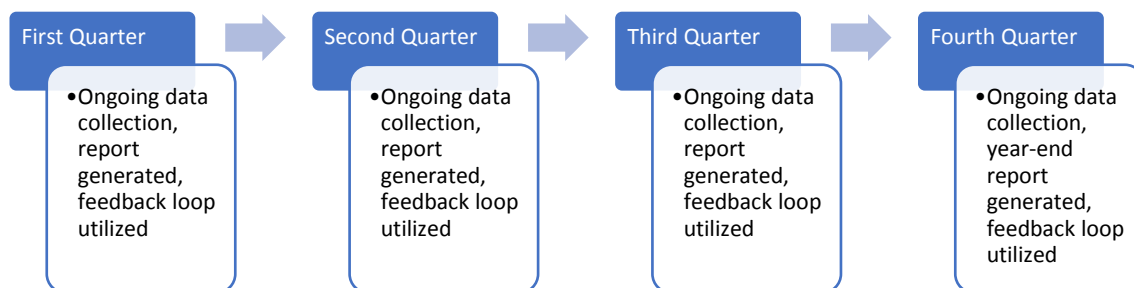
| First Quarter | Second Quarter | Third Quarter | Fourth Quarter |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Ongoing data collection, report generated, feedback loop utilized | • Ongoing data collection, report generated, feedback loop utilized | • Ongoing data collection, report generated, feedback loop utilized | • Ongoing data collection, year-end report generated, feedback loop utilized |

*Figure 2. Evaluation Feedback Loop and Reporting Timeline*

The evaluation will continue to use the core Implementation Team and activity specific teams established during the first year to monitor and support implementation. Built into the evaluation timeline at quarterly intervals throughout the next three years, the evaluation team will continue to meet with the Implementation Team to share the findings from the formative evaluation. (Figure 2) In addition to the Implementation Team, the three principal investigators will work with the leadership of DSS, First Steps, and ECAC to review findings and identify areas for continuous improvement, and inform any updates of the logic model, Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. The evaluation will systematically gather and analyze implementation data at all levels and use pre-determined metrics to assess the effectiveness of implementation. This data will be used by the data-driven feedback loops within and between the Implementation Team and activity groups – as well as locally via local First Steps and parent leadership/2 Gen work - to inform decisions about any necessary adjustments to the proposed activities, building or strengthening of necessary infrastructure, and to ensure continuous quality improvement. These feedback loops will aid the evaluation in identifying new data sources and also help to inform the implementation of the activities. A summary of the findings from each quarter will be generated at the end of each year, with a cumulative report at the end of Year 4.

This evaluation plan uses a mixed-methods approach to complete a formative and summative evaluation guided by the framework of implementation science. The table below identifies methods of data collection, sampling (where applicable) and projected analysis. This is similar to the Year 1 evaluation to ensure that data are able to be compared through Year 4. The evaluation team will attend in-person meetings as well as conduct data collection through virtual means. Sampling of interviews, surveys and focus groups will be a convenience sampling. In addition, each Activity will generate a performance progress report that summarizes the activities carried out during the past quarter, highlighted success, barriers and any steps taken to address those areas. South Carolina looks forward to continued collaboration with PDG Technical Assistance providers to review and update implementation reporting programs.

| IS Stage | Type of Evaluation | Methods for Data Collection | Sampling (as applicable) | Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exploration | Formative | Administrative data, online surveys, interviews, focus groups, document review | Convenience and snowball sampling Stratified Sample for Summative Evaluation of CTK | Quantitative analysis Frequency analysis, other tests as applicable Qualitative analysis, content and thematic analysis Triangulation across findings |
| Installation | Formative | Administrative data, online surveys, interviews, focus groups, document review, policy review | | |
| Initial Implementation | Formative | | | |
| Full Implementation | Summative | All of the above, cost analysis, quasi-experimental design for CTK | | |

As activities progress from the installation stage into the initial implementation stage, the formative evaluation will gather input via the 5 Key Elements'[2](5 E's): Effective; Efficient; Engaging; Error Tolerant; and Easy to Learn. These sets of questions target how well the activities are being implemented by addressing barriers and developing solutions quickly. It is

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[2] The 5 Key Elements are adapted for this evaluation from the dimensions of usability presented in this reference: Quesenbery, W. (2003). The five dimensions of usability (Vol. 20, p9-90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

important to note that progress through the four implementation stages is not linear. Instead, activities may circle through stages, returning to a focus of a previous stage. The evaluation plan utilizes multiple metrics to ensure a strong examination of process, cost, program implementation, and to assess the overarching goals listed in the logic model that is informed by the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. For instance, the frequency of meetings for activity groups and the Implementation Team, count of partner attendance at meetings, application of a collaboration measure (a measure that will assess collaboration of workgroups, etc.), and an open-ended survey will help to assess progress towards achieving the goals.

A specific formative and summative evaluation for Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) will be conducted by research partners at the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement (REM) Center in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. The 3-year evaluation will use a quasi-experimental design to understand the effectiveness of CTK on three focus populations: parents/caregivers, teachers/participating school staff, and students (entering kindergarteners). The focus of the evaluation will include examination of 1) recruitment of CTK participants, 2) implementation of the program, and 3) outcomes related to the three focus populations. Surveys and interviews will be conducted with parents/caregivers and teachers/school staff of participating and non-participating CTK children within a stratified random sample of schools based on location and student population. If successful, publishing peer reviewed results will enable CTK to access additional state (First Steps) funding dedicated to evidence-based programs.

In addition to the evaluation of the specific activities, outputs, outcomes, and progress using implementation science as an overall evaluation of the grant, the Implementation Team will assess how the findings of the Needs Assessment have been incorporated in the Strategic

Plan. This will be one of the metrics of the summative evaluation of the Strategic Plan as an output of the Needs Assessment.

| Activity | Formative Evaluation Metrics | Summative Evaluation Metrics |
|---|---|---|
| **Activity 1** | focus groups, interviews, cost analysis, etc. | See Pages 3 and 60 |
| **Activity 2** | focus groups, interviews, cost analysis, etc. | |
| **Activity 3** | surveys, document analysis, cost analysis, etc. | |
| **Activity 4** | focus groups, interviews, document review, cost analysis, etc. | |
| **Activity 5** | focus groups, interviews, document review, cost analysis, etc. | |

The evaluation plan relies on SC's Integrated B-5 Data System to ensure that reliable system- and program-level administrative data is collected, analyzed, and frequently reported. The Data Warehouse at RFA has the ability to link individual records of children across multiple agencies, which will be utilized during the program and outcome evaluation to truly understand the progress and impact of the proposed initiatives while simultaneously expanding and enhancing the existing system. Data points include, but are not limited to, publicly-funded program participation, subsidy usage, quality ratings, program, family and early childhood workforce participation and budgeting. The Performance Evaluation Plan will follow all protocols established by RFA regarding data collection, confidentiality, and data integrity. South Carolina is working to identify appropriate methods to collect the following data points that are not currently collected: number of eligible number of children awaiting service; methods of data collection to measure quality correlated to TA or training; data on quality of programs including ABCQ, state PreK, Head Start, etc.; access to data on programs serving children with IFSPs and IEPs beyond those receiving subsidy; workforce data and connection to program quality; child outcome data; suspension/expulsion data across EC sectors; data on number of families of children with disabilities needing child care and those denied enrollment related to disability.

Continuing to build and strengthen SC's comprehensive data system is a goal of this proposal. The evaluation will examine existing infrastructure, systems, and data elements and linkages between data systems throughout the project. Gaps in data availability at the Data Warehouse informed by the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, activities related to filling these gaps, and activities related to merging data from the programs and services will be captured within the formative evaluation, allowing for gaps in the data and changes to metrics to be addressed in a timely way.

**Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement**

An Early Childhood Study Committee of legislators and stakeholders is currently receiving testimony through the end of 2019 on possible structural changes to SC's B-5 system, including the feasibility of consolidating programs, creating a dedicated early childhood agency, and/or strengthening the role of the ECAC as the state's Children's Cabinet. Regardless of the study's recommendation, the ECAC is continuing to strengthen its infrastructure and take on additional interagency responsibilities as described in this application. Beginning in Year 2, the position of ECAC Manager will move from PDG-funded to a state-funded position within First Steps. The following indicates the state's decision makers and decision-making path.

- Governor's Office and ECAC
- Co- PDG Leads – Michele Bowers, DSS and Cassie Barber, First Steps
- Project Activity Leads

The following chart identifies stakeholders who have been involved and will be involved in the assessment, planning and implementation of all activities, ensuring representation from across the B-5 system including health and family support services. Each PDG Partner serves in

an advisory role to the process. Bolded names indicate Leadership/Decision Makers, astericks *
indicate Activity Implementation Leads.

| Name | Organization | Name | Organization |
|------|-------------|------|-------------|
| Abney-Young, Mary | SC DSS | Kilburn, Janice, | SC First Steps |
| Allison, Rep. Rita | House of Representatives | Kimrey, Joyce | SC DSN |
| Antill, Rebecca | SC State Library | Kovacs, Cathy* | ABC Quality |
| Artz, Jon | SC First Steps | Lara, Cynthia | Child Care Licensing |
| Atkinson, Patrick | SC DSS | Legette,Cassa | SC First Steps |
| Baker, Laura | SC First Steps | Lett, Naomi | United Way |
| Baldwin, Icelynn | Children's Trust | Lisk, David | York County FS |
| **Barber, Cassie*** | SC First Steps | Manoski, Barbara | Spartanburg FS |
| Barnes, Mark | SC First Steps | Martin, Maria | PASOs |
| Barton, Wendy | Educ. Oversight Comm | May, Jenny | SC DOE |
| Bellamy, Eric | Children's Trust | Mazur, Joy | SC First Steps |
| Bergin, Anne | SC PITC | McClellan, Sally | SCAEYC |
| Bishop, Chris | Nurse-FamilyPartnership | McDonald, Mel.* | CCCCD |
| Blanton, Lisa | Cherokee County School | McGuire,Steph | SC Thrive |
| Bowden, Neely Hart | Fairfield County Schools | McMoore, Jessica | Com Action Partners |
| **Bowers, Michele*** | SC DSS | Mitchell, Doris | Barnwell First Steps |
| Brewton, Arthur | SC Head Start Assoc. | **Mjartan,Georgia** | SC First Steps |
| Bryson, Lora | Lancaster County FS | Moseley, Amy | Children's Trust |
| Buckner, Amity | Pickens County FS | Nash, Marcia | Aiken County FS |
| Buffalo, Karen | Sumter EHS | Nesbitt, Toshia | Author |
| Burgess, Wendy | SC DOE | Newman,Virginia | Calhoun First Steps |
| Buster, Jennifer | SC HHS | Nixon, David | Anderson School Dist |
| Campbell, Crystal | Dorchester County FS | Pasley, James | Waccamaw EOC |
| Canright, Shelley | SC First Steps | Patterson, David | RFA |
| Carpenter, Laurey | SC Thrive | Pearson, Misty | Dept. Health & Env |
| Carter, Gina | Richland One Early Chil. | Powell, Dana | Children's Trust |
| Ciaramitaro, Paul | Save the Children | Priester, Dorothy | Cherokee County FS |
| Corley, Jazmyn | Family Connection | Pruitt, Angela | Abbeville County FS |
| Corning, Lisa L. | SCAEYC/Midlands Tech | Pryor Jr., Roger | HS Gov Council |
| Cothran, Wyatt | SC DOE | Rao, Vasanthi | USC Child Dev. Res. |
| Crawford, Sarah* | SC RFA | Richard, Chelsea | SC First Steps |
| Cunningham, Prolan | SC First Steps | Richardson,Tricia | SC Thrive |
| D'Amico, Leigh* | REM | Riddle, Jim | Lexington County FS |
| DePaoli, Deborah | Save the Children | Roach, Kate | SC First Steps |
| Dickenson,Tammie, | REM | Robertson,Debbie | SC First Steps |
| Diggs, Mary Lynne* | SC Head Start Collab | Robertson, Monty | SC First Steps |
| Drews, Marc | Children's Museum | Sanders, LaMyra | Orange County FS |
| Dueno, Sherrie | SC DSS-DECE | Schnake, Kerrie* | SC PITC |
| Dunn, Melissa | United Way Midlands | Seale, Taylor | SC DOE |
| Durham, Patty | Coastal Com Foundation | Seals, Kimberly, | SC Health and Envir. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Felks, Stephanie | SC State University | Session, Debra | SC DSS |
| Flemming, Walter | Head Start | Shapiro, Cheri, | Families in Society |
| Foster, Rick | Alliance for Healthier SC | Smithwick, Julie | PASOs |
| Gardiner, Betty | SC First Steps | Spigener, Kim | SC DOE |
| Gaskin, Michael | Greenwood County FS | Srivastav, Aditi | Children's Trust |
| Gass.Sonia | Save the Children | Stanley, Chip | First Steps |
| Giese, BZ | ED of BQI | Starker, Melissa* | SC-CCCCD |
| **Gillum, Amber** | SC DSS | Stephens, Alexa | Berkeley First Steps |
| Googe, Heather* | SC Child Care Inclusion | Still, Ellen | Family Engag Center |
| Hall, Patricia | Allendale County FS | Strickland, Laurie | Family Connection |
| Hanna, Ablean B. | SCDE - Early Learning | Strickland,Martha | SC First Steps |
| Harris, Melissa | ISWA Head Start | Teer, Debbie | Lexington County FS |
| Haselden, Catherine | SC DSS | Tucker, Sharon | SC DSS |
| Hinson, Bridget | SC DSS-DECE ABCQ | Utter, Karen | School Improv. Co |
| Holbert, Amy | Family Connection | Wall, Paige, | Anderson County FS |
| Howard, Tiffany* | Help Me Grow | Ward, Bunnie | Educ Oversight Com. |
| Hudson, Tom | School Improvement Co | Werner, Chris* | SC Thrive |
| Hunter, Beverly* | SC DSS | West, Pat | LCFS |
| Hussey, Julie | First Steps, Trustee | Wilkes, Patti | Fairfield County FS |
| Ingram, Samantha | SC First Steps | Williams, Bett | Children's Trust |
| Irvin, Matt | USC | Williams, Lovetta | SC DSS |
| Jeffcoat, Christi | SC DSS | Williams, Sue | Children's Trust |
| Jeter, Shunna Vance | Commission, Inc. | Witowski, Jane* | Help Me Grow |
| Johnson, Angel | Coastal Com. Foundation | Woodle, Elissa | Creative Beginnings |
| Johnson, John | Tree, LLC | Woods Kathy | Head Start |
| Johnson, Louise | SC DMH | Young, Mike | PASOs |
| Jones, Morgan | SC DSS | | |

## PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

| Activity | Year 2 2020 | Year 3 2021 | Year 4 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity 1 – Statewide Needs Assessment** | | | |
| Completion of needs assessment - First Steps partnerships. | X | | |
| IHEC to plan / implement updates to Needs Assess. | | X | X |
| Produce updated statewide Needs Assessment. | | X | X |
| Conduct an assessment of child care facilities. | | X | |
| **Activity 2 – Statewide Strategic Plan** | | | |
| Assess strategies and action steps and make adjustments. | X | X | X |
| Qrterly/Annual work sessions to share progress/feedback. | X | X | X |
| Quarterly and annual reports for ECAC. | X | X | X |
| Convene family focus groups to support feedback loops. | X | X | X |
| **Activity 3 - Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, & Engagement** | | | |
| Launch First Five identity and public education campaign | X | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Launch First Five portal | | X | |
| Launch Palmetto PreK portal and public educ. campaign | X | | |
| Develop common eligibility and application process. | X | | |
| Launch SC Thrive common application by early 2021. | | X | |
| Increased #of families participating in evidence-based home visitation and parent support services. | 150 | 500 | 500 |
| Expand Help Me Grow availability in SC from current level (Upstate, Coastal regions) to statewide. | X | | |
| Develop statewide network and superuser training to support system navigators within existing systems. | X | X | X |
| Provide Peer support for families with children with disabilities in underserved PeeDee region, expand availability of Family Connection in-person and online training and supports statewide. | X | X | X |
| Expand PASOs services for Latino families. | 3 sites | 6 sites | 6 sites |
| Increase availability of WIC-certified nutrition education. | X | X | X |
| Create a network of the state's parent leadership programs to inform feedback loops to the Needs Assess. and Str Plan. | X | X | X |
| Improve policies to support 2 Gen programs in SC. | X | X | X |
| **Activity 4 - Sharing Best Practices & Professional Development** | | | |
| Launch online learning management system and credential incentives with the state's home visitation workforce. | 100 staff | 125 staff | 150 staff |
| Expand IECMH workforce statewide. | X | X | X |
| Provide 2 scholarships to SC-EPFP each year for B-5 system policy makers and leaders. | X | X | X |
| Use new Workforce Registry platform to expand marketing of shared PD opportunities. | X | X | X |
| Provide Palmetto PreK "Jamboree" shared PD opportunities for preschool (3K/4K) teachers and directors. | 5 regions | 5 regions | 5 regions |
| Provide "Baby Jam" shared PD for infant and toddler teachers and directors. | 4 regions | 4 regions | 4 regions |
| Launch shared data system for the Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) workforce to share CQI activities. | X | | |
| Increase free online learning for early learning workforce and parents through SCETV. | X | X | X |
| Increase percentage of ECE teachers completing post-secondary education programs via Smart Money bonuses. | X | X | X |
| Award retention bonuses to teachers who remain in the ECE field after completing ECE credentials. | X | X | X |
| Expand Be Well Care Well program to ECE programs. | X | X | X |
| Launch Family Child Care Communities of Practice. | regions | regions | regions |
| Add Inclusion Specialist to state network for child care. | X | | |
| Provide Transition Toolkit to all SC elementary schools for supporting kindergarten transitions. | X | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Offer in-service training in transition practices to elementary school staff. | 10 | 15 | 25 |
| Increase number of families participating in Countdown to Kindergarten and the percentage of SC counties with CTK. | 400 50% | 600 60% | 800 75% |
| IHE partners to add IECMH to 2 & 4-year coursework. | X | X | X |
| Develop an interdisciplinary learning community for IECMH across early learning and child-serving sectors. | X | | |
| Training in DC:0-5 mental health screening for ECE. | X | X | X |
| **Activity 5 - Improving Overall Quality, Service Integration, Access** | | | |
| Launch ABCQ marketing campaign. | X | | |
| Add 2 staff to promote ABCQ enrollment, retention, and advancing quality levels | X | | |
| Enroll FCC and FFN providers in Parents as Teachers caregiver support program. | 25 | 30 | 35 |
| Train a 2$^{nd}$ cohort of PAT certified parent educators to serve FCC and FFN providers. | | | 25 |
| Launch FCC home Initiative to provide support and dedicated vouchers for new FCC providers. | 20 | 25 | 30 |
| Add Master Coach to support FS local TAP workforce | X | | |
| Provide incentives for providers and TA staff to meet Quality Enhancement goals. | 18 counties | 18 counties | 20 counties |
| Provide Program Administration Scale (PAS) training. | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Provide grants to incentivize enrollment /retention -ABCQ. | X | X | X |
| Pilot 0-3 vouchers, PITC support for ABCQ and FS 4K | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Support mixed delivery within Head Start | X | X | X |
| **Activity 6 – Data Integration** | | | |
| Complete steps outlined in USDOE's Early Childhood Integrated Data System Toolkit. | | X | |
| Add additional early learning programs to the B-5 Integrated Data System. | | X | X |
| Conduct quasi-experimental evaluation of CTK, for peer review in Year 4. | X | X | Peer review |

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**Organizational Chart**
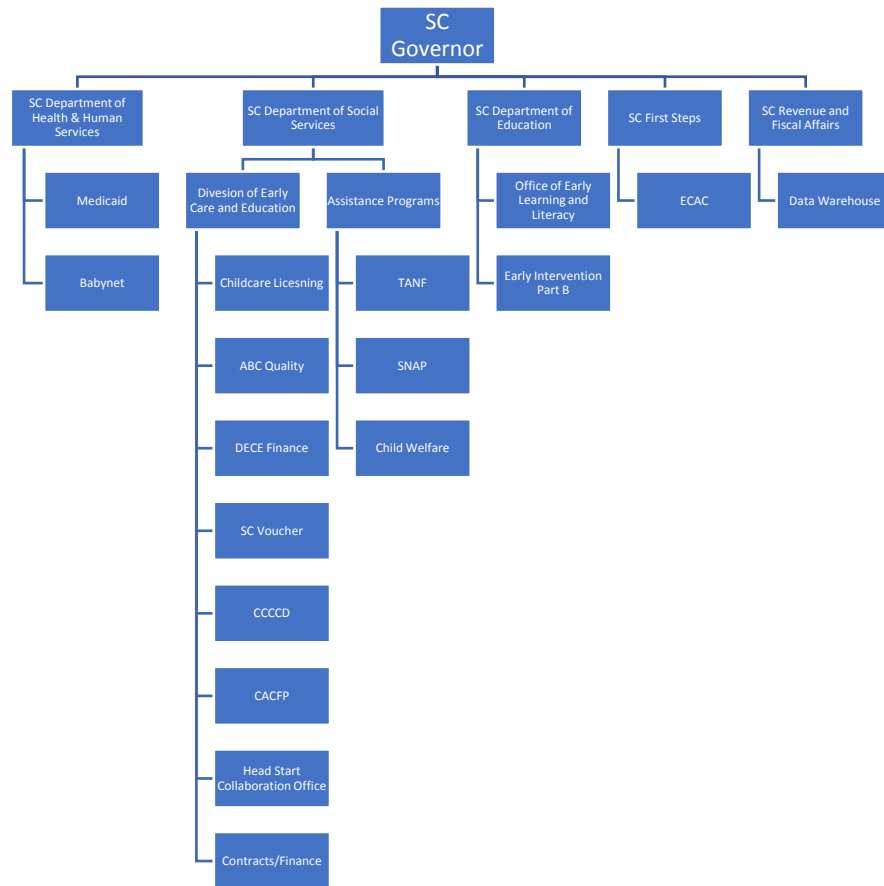


The following table provides information about the SC PDG B-5 key agency partners, the key project staff and their role within the PDG B-5 Initiatives and the experience and expertise related to the grant deliverables.

| Agency Partner | Key Individual | Role/ Responsibility | Yrs Exp. | Expertise/Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SCDSS** | Michele Bowers | CCDF Administrator, | 29 | B.S. in Psychology |
| **SCDSS** | Beverly Hunter | ABCQ Program Dir | 41 | M.S. in Psychology |
| **SCDSS** | Cathy Kovacs | ABC Quality Program | 21 | M.A. ECE, ABCQ |
| **SCDSS** | Cynthia Lara | Licensing Dir | 17 | M.A. Management |
| **SCDSS** | Christi Jeffcoat | SC Vouchers, Manager | 26 | B.A. Public Affairs |
| **SCDSS** | M. McDonald | CCCCD | 21 | B.S. degree |
| **SCDSS** | M. Diggs | HS Collab. Director | 21 | M.A. in Public Management |
| **SCDSS** | Debra Session | Contracts Manager | 40+ | MSW |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SCDSS** | C. Haselden | DECE Finance Manager | 40+ | MSW, B.S. Accounting |
| **USC** | Vasanthi Rao | Child care data Center | 15 | Ph.D. Ed. Research and Eval |
| **SC PITC** | K. Schnake | Director of SCPITC | 12 | M.A. ECE |
| **Inclusion** | Heather Googe | SC Inclusion Collab | 7 | Ph.D. Special Education |
| **SC FS** | G. Mjartan | Executive Director | 17 | MSc Public Affairs |
| **SC FS** | Cassie Barber | ECAC Coordinator | 26 | MA Human Behavior/Conflict |
| **SC FS** | D. Robertson | Partnership Officer | 29 | M.A. Equity Leaders Action |
| **SC FS** | Betty Gardiner | Grants Management | 19 | MBA/MA |
| **SC FS** | Janice Kilburn | Program Officer | 34 | Ph.D. Dev. Psychology |
| **SC FS** | M. Strickland | 4K Director | 34 | Masters ECE |
| **SC FS** | Gina Beebe | PAT Lead | 33 | BS |
| **SC DOE** | Quincie Moore | Dir, EL and Literacy | 35 | Ph,D. |
| **SC DOE** | Jenny May | Part B 619 Coordinator | 4 | Ph.D., Educational Psychology |
| **Babynet** | Jennifer Buster | IDEA Part C Manager | 25 | MA Early Childhood |
| **DHHS** | A. Dwyer | Director, Beh. Health | 32 | MSW, LISW-CP |
| **DMH** | Louise Johnson | Dir, Div of Children | 10+ | MS Counseling |
| **REM** | T. Dickinson | Director | 20+ | Ph.D. Research and Evaluation |
| **F Conn.** | Amy Holbert | Exec. Director | 26 | LISW-CP, MSW |
| **C. Trust** | Aditi Srivastav | Impact Manager | 8 | MPH, Ph.D. |
| **C. Trust** | I. Baldwin | Quality Improv. Man. | 11 | LMSW |
| **PASOs** | Julie Smithwick | Exec. Director, | 24 | MSW, Comm. Health Worker |
| **PASOs** | Maria Martin | Program Director | 19 | BSW, Community Health |
| **PASOs** | Mike Young | Dir. Capacity Building | 11 | MA, Community Health |
| **RFA** | David Patterson | Division Dir | 20+ | Ph.D. Data Integration |
| **SIC** | Karen Utter | Associate Director | 8 | MA, JD |
| **CCRR** | M. McDonald | Director | 28 | BS ECE |

The SC Department of Social Services Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) is designated as the lead agency to administer the Child Care Development Fund. The division is made up of staff from Child Care Licensing, SC Voucher, ABC Quality (QRIS), the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD), Head Start Collaboration Office, and the Child and Adult Care Food program. The division is within the agency for TANF, SNAP and Child Welfare which allows for coordination to ensure appropriate service delivery.

SC First Steps to School Readiness (First Steps) is a public-private partnership governed by a state board of trustees that includes the Governor (or designee) as Chair, legislative and

gubernatorial appointees, state legislators, heads of child-serving agencies, and the director of the Head Start Collaboration Office. Supporting the system is a state coordinating office – itself an entity of state government and a nonprofit - and a network of local partnerships, one per county, each a nonprofit organization led by a partnership board. Local First Steps partnerships receive an annual grant of state funds that they then leverage with other public and private resources. More than 30,000 children ages 0-5 are impacted annually by local partnership services: the most common programs are Parents as Teachers (First Steps is the state's PAT Office), parent training, literacy programs, child care technical assistance and training, child care subsidy, community education, and CTK. Community needs assessments and strategic planning cycles determine what partnerships choose to focus on, which make each local First Steps look slightly different.

## LOGIC MODEL

SC's Strategic Plan serves as the state's logic model for the SC ECE System. The following narrative and simplified model captures major highlights:

| Overarching Goals: |
| --- |
| Child-serving agencies and organizations share a common vision, goals, and outcomes; |
| Coordination, collaboration, and alignment across mixed delivery system that supports increase in access for families; |
| Shared recruitment and application processes; |
| Coordinated efforts to maximize parents' knowledge of the system and available services; |
| Statewide activities to support transitions for children between various early childhood programs and into elementary school; |
| Shared PD to meet the complex social and emotional development needs of vulnerable children and families, including trauma-informed care; |
| Expanded supports to improve quality; and data-driven decision-making |

**Target Population:** Children who have characteristics that make them more vulnerable, underserved and underachieving. South Carolina identifies vulnerable and underserved children as those who fall in one of three categories: eligibility for state and federal programs serving "at-

risk" children; characteristics of the geographical areas of residence; and minority populations facing disparities based on evidence of inequities.
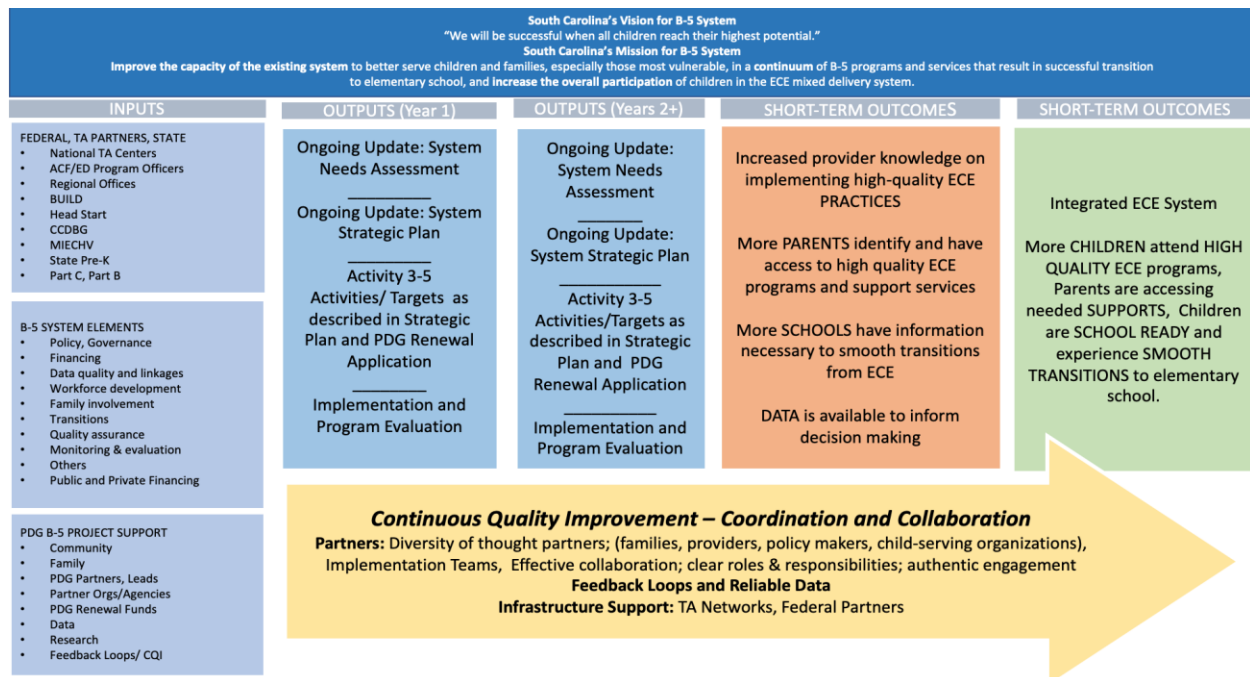


## PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The initiatives proposed for Years 2-4 were carefully selected based on their promise for long term sustainability and SC's commitment to build from existing initiatives. Grant deliverables are either: 1) in the second phase of a multi-year implementation plan using PDG B-5 renewal grant dollars or re-allocated quality dollars; or 2) part of a pilot based on feedback gathered during the Needs Assessment and moved to an objective in the Strategic Plan. The following strategies are being utilized to support sustainability of initiatives. We have also provided an illustrative example for some strategies:

| Strategies | Examples |
|---|---|
| **Partnerships** | Private foundations have expressed interest leveraging funds |
| **Build solid systems** | SC Thrive Common Application (Bonus 1) |
| **Blend /braid funding** | Child care, Head Start, and state PreK |
| **Contracts and Grants** | FCC Provider Pilot |
| **Realign CCDF $** | Identify opportunities to offset the cost of quality to ECE providers. |

## DISSEMINATION PLAN

South Carolina has identified the following dissemination goals and objectives:

| Dissemination Goals: |
| --- |
| To develop an effective dissemination and communication strategy |
| To engage in a CQI process utilizing feedback loops with ECE providers, families, PDG B-5 project partners, policy makers, advocates & organizations supporting families of children B-5 |
| To ensure that all families and providers receive information regarding available opportunities/services in a manner that is culturally responsive |
| **Dissemination Objectives:** |
| To raise awareness about the PDG B-5 project and all ECE services |
| To encourage providers and families to access available ECE supports |

Effective dissemination of information and resources is complex due to the multiple audiences being addressed, one approach will not fit every stakeholder. The SC dissemination plan is tailored to the following target audiences: families, ECE providers, child and family serving agencies and organizations, PDG B-5 project partners, and policy makers, advocates and organizations supporting families of children B-5. The table below provides a summary of the PDG B-5 Dissemination Plan. The ECAC web site will be used by ECE stakeholders to keep abreast of PDG and system level initiatives, including achievements and there is a password-protected section for Implementation Team communication.

| Target Audience | Families | ECE Providers | Project Partners | Policy Makers, Advocates, Orgs |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity/ Method** | ECE navigators, Resources parent leaders | Webinars TA providers update emails | PD, Qtrly/Annual partner calls & meetings | ECAC meetings Qtrly/annual report |
| **Staff Allocation** | ECAC Comm. DEC | DECE ECAC | ECAC Comm. DECE | ECAC Comm. DECE |
| **Evaluation** | Referrals, analytics, surveys, focus grps | Analytics focus grps, surveys | Qtrly/annual rpt Survey, feedback | Solicited feedback |
| **Activity Timeline** | Ongoing | Qtrly webinars & emails, website | Qtrly meetings calls, qrtly reports | Semi-annual |

## THIRD PARTY AGREEMENTS - not applicable

## SC PDG PROJECT BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

**a. Personnel** – 3 Staff members to support ECE infrastructure to manage PDG and related activities.

   **Personnel Total:** $141,000

**b. Fringe Benefits** – $60,630

   **Fringe Benefits Total:** $60,630

**c. Travel** –

- Four people will attend a 3-day PDG B-5 grantee meeting in Washington D.C. These costs will adhere to travel, meal and lodging rates set by GSA and SC per diem. For these attendees, we expect costs to be:
- $256.00 for lodging per person (x4), per day (x3) = 3,072
- $50.00/day for meal and incidental expenses (x4) = 600.00
- $500/per person for Transportation (x4) = 2,000

   **Travel Total: $5,672.00**

**d. Equipment** – This grant will not support any equipment costs.

**Equipment Total: $0**

**e. Supplies** – This grant will not support any equipment costs.

**Supplies Total: $0**

**f. Contractual** – SCDSS DECE will work with multiple partners through existing contractual agreements


Please refer to the budget table below for a detailed breakout of expected costs by activity.

**Contractual Total: $8,903,902**


**Construction** –This grant will not support any construction costs or activities.

   **Construction Total: $0.00**

**h. Other** –

- Activity 4: $490,000 SC DSS Support of ECE Workforce
- Activity 5: $2,862,906 SC DSS Mixed Delivery support and ABC Quality Incentives

Please refer to the enclosed budget table for a detailed breakout of expected costs by activity.

   **Other Total: $3,352,906**

**i. Total Direct Charges - $12,464,110**

**j. Indirect Charges - $0**

**TOTAL - $12,464,110**

**Budget Table Detailing Cost Breakouts**

| Activity | Task | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| | Personnel + Fringe | $141,000 + $60,630 |
| 1 | B-5 Needs Assessment | $470,120 |
| 2 | B-5 Strategic Plan | $353,000 |

| 3 | Maximizing Parent Knowledge | $2,767,110 |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Sharing Best Practices | $1,966,360 |
| 5 | Improving Overall Quality | $3,278,601 |
| 6 | Monitor, Evaluation, Data | $646,161 |
| Bonus | Common Application | $458,000 |
| Bonus | Infant and Toddler | $1,000,000 |
| | Travel | $5,672 |
| TOTAL | | **$ 11,146,654** |

**Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement**

The 30 percent match for the proposed federal funding for Year One is $3,343,966.  The

matching funds to fulfill this requirement are provided through in-kind match from SC

Department of Education/SC First Steps.  All funds are for services that fulfill the requirements

of 45 CFR **§** 75.306 in that they are verifiable, not included as contributions for any other federal

award, and are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of the activities proposed in this

funding request.

## BONUS POINTS

**Bonus #1 Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families**

SC will: 1) Provide one point of access for services in coordination with all other early

learning support services within the state; and 2) Coordinate enrollment based on income levels.

**SC Thrive Common Application** (**3.2 New**) **-** SC Thrive will collaborate with a technical

vendor to develop and implement a common application within a larger comprehensive system

allowing parents to utilize a one-stop tool to apply for multiple programs and resources for their

children at birth, in preschool, and entering elementary school. The system will connect with

state agencies through APIs that meet the needs of each entity. It will also include a case

management component to assign timestamps to each individual application, track program

eligibility determination, and proceed through a continuum according to order of receipt. The

common application will reside within SC Thrive's larger comprehensive system which allows for application completion of multiple work supports including SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, and other benefit programs. The system also provides a closed loop referral system, evaluation matrix to measure the effectiveness of program goals in relation to client outcomes, document repository, resume' builder, and online learning management system to empower parents and case managers to take advantage of continuing education.

**Bonus #2 Infant/Toddler Emphasis**

**Activity: Infant/Toddler Emphasis #4**: Adding indicators specific to infants and toddlers in data systems that track children's progress and link these systems with other early childhood

      **Help Me Grow (HMG) (3.2 New)** – Help Me Grow (HMG) is a national model currently available in the upstate and coastal regions of SC that links families to existing community-based resources and services for children 0-5 at risk for developmental, behavioral, or learning problems. A parent will call HMG and speak with a child development expert who will listen to presented concerns and offer a confidential assessment to identify a child's need(s). HMG maintains a comprehensive database of community resources available for families and works with families to deploy services they need in response to developmental screenings. Years 2-4 will create a statewide HMG office and network so that families statewide can access HMG services, and so that the developmental data HMG maintains on children 0-3 will be more widely accessible to all child-serving agency partners to inform service needs at the community level. The centralized maintenance of information at a state HMG office coupled with SC's Infant/Toddler Specialist Network (SC PITC), the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Network, and the Be Well Care Well program, ensures that the data can more

readily be integrated with other infant/toddler support systems and used to braid services together in a way that is meaningful to families.

**Activity: Bonus – Infant/Toddler Emphasis #5:** Providing infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultation to ECE programs so that caregivers are better able to support very young children's wellbeing.

**Expand IECMH Consultation** **(4.3 Existing) -** For Years 2-4 we propose the implementation of the IECMH Consultation Network in four regions, with each region supporting two IECMH Consultants. The IECMH Consultation model delivers relationship-focused consultation to support the social-emotional health of young children using child care as the access point. IECMH Consultants will be housed in their local Department of Mental Health and will be clinically trained professionals with skills and knowledge to recognize trauma, assess the social-emotional health of children, and provide appropriate support. Levels of support will match the assessed need and can include referral to SC PITC for targeted coaching. In instances when the adult caregivers are struggling to meet the needs of a child, the IECMH Consultant will target supports for the adult. Where children are expressing challenging behaviors, the IECMH Consultant will provide intensive support to the child and all influential adult caregivers.

**Activity: Bonus – Infant/Toddler Emphasis #6:** Creating an Infant Toddler Specialist Network to ensure CCR&R staff have expertise in early childhood development.

**Bonus #3 - Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades**

**2:** Ongoing collaboration between PreK, kindergarten, and the early grades professionals

**3:** Partnerships between early childhood programs and local education districts and schools

**Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)** **(4.3 Existing/Expanded)** – as described earlier, CTK is a relationship-based home visitation school transition program that pairs families of

high-risk rising kindergartners with their future teachers during the summer before school entry for five home visits and a sixth school visit. School districts work with their local First Steps partnerships to identify and recruit children based on readiness risk factors, such as lack of exposure to preschool, low maternal education, incarcerated parent, etc. Parent survey results show an increased understanding of kindergarten expectations, children looking forward to kindergarten, and stronger trust in their child's teacher. Teacher survey results indicate that children are more successful than their non-CTK peers with similar risk factors in the areas of social and emotional and literacy development, and parents are more involved and have better attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Years 2-4 funding will continue CTK expansion to 75% of counties by Year 4 and support a quasi-experimental evaluation.