

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five: 2020 Grant Summary

Introduction

In December 2019, North Carolina was awarded a three-year grant through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), which builds on the previous year's planning grant to strengthen North Carolina's Early Childhood System. The 2020 grant provides North Carolina with \$40.2 million over three years to improve programs serving children ages 0-5 by maximizing parental choice, improving transitions between early learning programs and elementary schools, and increasing the overall quality of early care and education programs. The six activities proposed in North Carolina's PDG B-5 application are summarized below. To learn more, the full grant application is available on the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education website [here](#) or at <https://ncchildcare.ncdohhs.gov/Whats-New/preschool-development-grant-birth-through-five-pdg-b-5-renewal-grant-award>

Updating the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

- **Activity 1: B-5 Needs Assessment** – North Carolina's Needs Assessment was completed during the planning year and focused on four primary themes: providing high-quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), ensuring children are on track for school success, fostering social-emotional resilience, and creating conditions for supportive and supported families. North Carolina will use feedback from their PDG Program Performance Evaluation to update the Needs Assessment for Year 2 and will begin planning for the Needs Assessment to be updated in 2021.
- **Activity 2: PDG B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan (B5SP)** – North Carolina's B5SP is aligned to the Needs Assessment and to the state's Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP). It focuses on four goals: high-quality early learning, on track for school success, supported and supportive families, and social-emotional health. To finalize the B5SP, DCDEE will incorporate feedback from the federal funder and from family engagement efforts.

Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement in their Child's Early Learning and Development

The Needs Assessment identified that families need additional information, support, and opportunities to connect to each other. Activity 3 includes four strategies to maximize family knowledge, connect families to appropriate services, learn from families about their experiences, and empower families to participate in their children's learning and development.

- **3.1: Universal Home Visiting Pilot (NEW)** – North Carolina will expand universal home visiting services to connect parents to high-quality child care and other supports and improve child development knowledge and positive parenting behaviors. The NC Partnership for Children will pilot *Family Connects*, a universal home visiting program, with an eventual goal of full statewide implementation. Approximately 9,900 families will be served in demonstration areas, with priority given to rural communities.
- **3.2: Building Family Engagement and Leadership** – North Carolina's Family Engagement and Leadership Coalition (FELC), comprised of parents, representatives from state agencies, and nonprofit organizations, will develop a train-the-trainer model for early childhood service providers, a parent leadership training, and state and regional family support networks. The NC Partnership for Children, Frank Porter Graham's Early Learning Network, and the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education will host six family summits with family leaders, support 20 peer support networks, and conduct 60 family leadership trainings to increase parent knowledge of existing services and parent confidence in navigating services through a parent peer network.
- **3.3: Increasing Local Capacity to Improve and Promote Family Engagement and Leadership** – The NC Partnership for Children will bring on ten new local Smart Start partnerships to refine the Family Engagement and Leadership Framework and toolkit each year, for a total of 40 local partnerships participating. Participating local partnerships will develop county-level family engagement action plans and sustainability plans.
- **3.4: Expanding and Improving Family Outreach Materials and Activities** – UNC-TV PBS Kids will host local family engagement events aimed specifically at traditionally under-served families to increase parent knowledge of existing services. PBS KIDS will also host family events, two Early Education Teacher Summits and six train-the-trainer workshops to provide educators with tools and resources.

Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce

The Needs Assessment and B5SP noted a need to improve the pipeline for early childhood educators to expand access to high-quality early learning. Activity Four includes three strategies to improve the pipeline, ensure teacher supply keeps up with demand, and build a competency-based model tied to education.

- **4.1: Coaching Toward Mastery: Advancing the ECE Professional (NEW)** – Coaching Toward Mastery (CTM) will provide professional development and practice-based coaching aligned with NAEYC’s Power to the Profession effort and community college coursework to early childhood educators, with a focus on infant-toddler teachers. Ninety-six early childhood teachers will receive individualized coaching, impacting an estimated 1,170 children.
- **4.2: Transition to Kindergarten** – A transition coordinator at the state level will continue to manage the process of transition from preschool to kindergarten. Seventeen North Carolina counties are scaling up their kindergarten transition plan to improve data sharing agreements and communications about child development information between Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers. Thirty-three counties will be added in Year 2 and Year 3 to expand the pilot, for a total of 50 counties.
- **4.3: Early Identification for Services (NEW)** – To increase early childhood practitioners’ knowledge of and confidence in addressing early childhood mental health issues, the NC Division of Public Health will support a state leadership team that will develop professional development for early childhood educators on trauma-informed care and early childhood screening and detection to improve early identification and referrals.

Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs

The Needs Assessment found that North Carolina families, particularly those from vulnerable populations, need affordable high-quality infant toddler care and improved access to early childhood education services. Activity 5 includes six strategies to improve overall quality, improve service integration, and expand access.

- **5.1: Improving the Quality of Infant and Toddler Environments (Babies First NC)** – Child Care Services Association will implement The Babies First North Carolina program in center-based 5-star early education and care settings to improve the quality of infant-toddler classrooms. Thirty-two participating programs and 60 early childhood teachers will receive enhanced payments and intensive coaching and professional development.
- **5.2: Statewide Infant Toddler Program Feasibility and Cost Study (NEW)** – A contractor will be selected to conduct a study of the practicality and cost of developing of a companion program to NC Pre-K for low-income infants and toddlers. A plan to pilot and scale the program will be developed in the third year of the grant.
- **5.3: Early Intervention Access, Transition, and Family Engagement (NEW)** – The Early Intervention Infant Toddler Program will expand a speech/language pathology teletherapy pilot, enhance family engagement in preschool transition, and engage families to support Local Interagency Coordinating Councils.
- **5.4: Increase ECE Access for Families Experiencing Homelessness (NEW)** – Yay Babies will lead the development of a state strategic plan to ensure young homeless children receive appropriate early education services and a self-assessment tool will be developed for emergency shelters to help families with young children.
- **5.5: Universal Application and Enrollment Process** – A cross-sector leadership team, including staff from DCDEE, DPI, the Head Start State Collaboration office, NCPC, and family representatives, will support the expansion of the Universal Application and Enrollment Process project (UEP), a sharing of best practices in developing a universal application and enrollment process for four-year-old children. UEP will be expanded to eight additional pilots and 34 counties across the state, prioritizing communities participating in the Transition to Kindergarten pilot and Family Engagement Coalitions.
- **5.6: Alternative Market Rate Model (NEW)** – A contractor will be engaged to develop up to three alternative models to North Carolina’s current market rate model for child care subsidy. A state advisory group will help guide the work and develop a legislative strategy to scale the program.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Data Use for Continuous Improvement, Meaningful Governance & Stakeholder Engagement

While North Carolina is already operational in the eight aspects of data integration, management, and use, the new PDG grants will continue efforts to improve early childhood data systems as recommended in the Needs Assessment.

- **6.1: Enhance and Expand NC ECIDS** – The NC Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) will be expanded to include home visiting, head start, public K-3 education data, and other early childhood programs. ECIDS will also be linked to North Carolina’s P-20W data system for more longitudinal tracking of data.
- **6.2: NCCARE360** – NCCARE360 is a shared technology platform that allows providers delivering care in North Carolina to electronically connect parents to community resources. The Secretary’s Office of the NC Department of Health and Human Services will ensure NCCARE360 is tailored to meet the needs of young children and early childhood providers.
- **6.3: Data Platform to Support Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten (NEW)** – The NC Department of Public Instruction will work with NC Pre-K classrooms to integrate the Teaching Strategies *Gold*® to assess children and share data and transition plans across Pre-K and kindergarten programs and the ReadyRosie family engagement system.
- **6.4: Data Informed Local Strategic Planning (NEW)** – A cross-sector Human Services Leadership Team will provide technical assistance to support 30 local communities in establishing data-informed, cross-sector early childhood improvement plans.
- **6.5: NC EC Data Advisory Council (NEW)** – The North Carolina EC Data Advisory Council, begun during Year 1, will be funded to provide state-level strategic direction to improve the quality of data collection and support the analysis and use of early childhood data by policymakers.

