State of Indiana
Preschool Development Grant: Birth through Five Renewal Application
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Indiana Family Social Services Administration
Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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SUMMARY

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) plays a vital role in Indiana, positively impacting children and families while creating a ripple effect on businesses and communities. As crucial as the ECCE system is, it has long been fragile due to unsustainable business models, insufficient workforce pipelines and poor operational infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, further destabilizing the ECCE system and placing key child learning outcomes at risk.

But despite these devastating impacts, silver linings have emerged. The pandemic increased public recognition of the importance of ECCE, spurred unprecedented federal support and facilitated significant progress in Indiana. In March 2022, new state legislation prioritized early learning by restructuring and expanding Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC). The Governor also launched a new Office of Kindergarten Readiness within the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to work in partnership with the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) to ensure the early learning experiences children receive are effectively readying them for school. In September 2022, new early learning policy goals were established by ELAC to ensure Hoosier children, especially those most underserved, have access to early learning opportunities that prepare them with the skills required to thrive in kindergarten. Four supporting objectives were also formed to assist this new public policy goal, including strengthening the ECCE workforce, building the supply and sustainability of high-quality care, increasing access and affordability for families, and improving kindergarten readiness. Stakeholders are pursuing these priorities with Indiana's remaining federal child care relief funds and existing state funding.

This critical groundwork to support system-level change and innovation makes Indiana uniquely positioned to receive and implement a PDG B-5 Renewal Grant. Indiana's ECCE priorities align directly with the grant opportunity, and receiving a grant will help accelerate and build Indiana's capacity to implement long-lasting change. Specifically, the grant will support Indiana in the following ways:

- Updating stakeholders' understanding of the needs, gaps and inequities in Indiana's birth through five (B-5) mixed delivery system, especially as they relate to underserved populations
- Refreshing Indiana's B-5 strategic plan to reflect the current environment and the existing opportunities to drive system-level change
- Amplifying the voices of families in decision-making and introducing new services and educational supports that empower them as their child's first and most important teacher
- Introducing new workforce recruitment and career pathways, building the operational capacity of ECCE providers and enhancing workforce conditions and compensation
- Strengthening instructional practices, quality measures and birth-to-age 8 coordination efforts
- Investing in the expansion of high-quality ECCE programs in underserved geographies

These efforts will enhance and build capacity for work already planned or underway in Indiana. OECOSL will lead the grant in close coordination with IDOE and various system partners.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Indiana seeks to create a vibrant and sustainable ECCE system that is steadfastly committed to ensuring children, especially those most underserved, arrive ready to thrive in kindergarten and beyond. The activity requirements and proposed strategies outlined in the grant will support Indiana in achieving this goal. Expected grant outcomes are summarized below and mapped by activity area.

Grant Activity Area	Intended Outcome
Update Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment	A clear and current articulation of the strengths and gaps of Indiana's B-5 mixed delivery system to support stakeholder understanding and action.
Update Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan	A shared plan for addressing B-5 system priorities and building critical stakeholder and partner coordination.
Maximize Family Engagement	Enhanced family knowledge and access to the B-5 mixed delivery system to support healthy child development and school readiness.
Support the Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices	A strengthened and more prepared workforce to support the needs of all children and families, especially those marginalized and underserved.
Support Quality Improvement	Improved program quality across the B-5 mixed delivery system to support increased learning and readiness outcomes.
Enhance Quality and Expand Access to ECCE Programs	Increased access to high-quality care in underserved areas of the state.

Bonus Options	Intended Outcome
Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment for Families	Improved navigation, access and delivery of critical support services.
Improved Workforce Compensation	Increased workforce quality and stability.
Increased Access to Inclusive Settings	Expanded access to inclusive care settings for underserved children and families.

APPROACH

While FSSA's OECOSL will serve as grant administrator, the office will collaborate closely with the IDOE to plan and execute grant efforts. This partnership between agencies will be noted by "the agencies" throughout the application. The agencies will employ a multi-faceted approach to achieving the goals of this grant and the broader objectives set forth for the system. First, Indiana will complete a strategic refresh of its 2018 statewide B-5 needs assessment to examine how the system landscape has changed in recent years, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort will include examining the changing needs of families, as well as a look at the current availability and quality of services. In this assessment, Indiana's priority will be on evaluating underserved populations and identifying the unique barriers, needs and inequities that exist for these populations in accessing and engaging with the B-5 system. For the purposes of this exercise and in this application, underserved is defined as those living in poverty or underserved areas of the state, children with or at risk for developmental delays or disabilities, dual/multi-language learners, and children eligible for or receiving social services. The assessment will combine and build on findings of recently completed studies, which share essential insights on the ECCE workforce, quality and accessibility.

From these findings, the agencies will engage diverse statewide stakeholders to update Indiana's B-5 strategic plan. Findings of the needs assessment will be evaluated against the system's current strategic plan and Indiana's more recently established early learning policy objectives to confirm areas of focus and create a final consolidated plan. Given recent efforts of ELAC and partners to assess the ECCE landscape to help inform federal relief dollar spending, the agencies expect this process to be accelerated. However, they see the exercise as a critical one for building stakeholder alignment around the prioritized needs of the system and developing partnerships for action.

Indiana will pursue the goals of its newly established strategic plan using funds from this grant opportunity and other funding streams, including Indiana's remaining federal child care relief funds, CCDF quality dollars and existing state funding. Consistent with priorities outlined in this grant and recent objectives established by

ELAC, Indiana expects the following goals to emerge in its next strategic plan: strengthening the ECCE workforce, building system quality, increasing access and supports for underserved families, and improving kindergarten readiness. Recent studies have been commissioned within Indiana to understand each of these issues, the findings of which will be incorporated into Indiana's needs assessment. Additionally, Indiana recently completed a comprehensive national landscape scan of the actions being taken by other states around these issues to identify best practices and draw inspiration for the strategies outlined in this grant application. The strategies contained in this document have been collaboratively developed by the agencies and various other system partners, such as ELAC, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Services – First Steps, Department of Child Services, Indiana Department of Mental Health and Addictions, Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (INAEYC), Early Learning Indiana, Shine Early Learning and more. (A full list of partners and their roles is available on pages 39-40.) These efforts will continue to benefit from the collective input of these partners, B-5 families and local communities in design and execution.

ACTIVITY 1: UPDATE COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE B-5 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Recap of 2018 Statewide Needs Assessment: In early 2019, the state of Indiana received a Preschool Development Grant (PDG) from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to increase access to quality ECCE services by improving collaboration and coordination among existing programs within Indiana's mixed delivery system. To support this effort, a comprehensive needs assessment was commissioned to evaluate the strengths, gaps and opportunities of Indiana's B-5 system and inform grant planning efforts. The needs assessment identified and analyzed existing early childhood data and reports and collected information regarding various aspects of the system, including statewide family need and demand, licensed supply, family enrollment across care settings, high-quality care options and public pre-K participation. The report also examined the needs and gaps within B-5 data sets and various other challenges

facing children, families and providers within the system. Highlighted findings from the 2018 assessment and related progress made by Indiana are included in the following table:

Finding	Recommendations	Related Progress
Fragmented and incomplete data to support B-5 system understanding and decision-making.	• Institute a comprehensive data system linking child- and program-level data so Indiana can reliably assess access, quality and marginalized populations receiving services. • Assign unique identifiers for children linked to their identifier in the K-12 system for enrollment data and long-term outcomes tracking. • Improve inter-agency data quality and sharing practices to strengthen program supports and monitor outcomes (e.g., data sharing between divisions within FSSA and between FSSA and IDOE)	Cited data issues led Indiana to research leading early childhood data systems in other states to help inform Indiana's planning for its system modernization effort. These learnings have been critical to the new system's design and planning for inter-agency data-sharing practices, both within divisions of FSSA and between FSSA and IDOE. The system development and configuration are underway, with an expected rollout date of the new data feature, IN Kids, in June 2024.
Quality standards are not aligned to the practices known to support child outcomes.	• Redefine quality levels and standards in the Paths to QUALITY™ system to support strengthened classroom practices and increased early childhood learning outcomes. • Institute new supports for programs in meeting heightened standards and expectations.	The quality concerns cited in the former needs assessment led stakeholders to commission an in-depth qualitative study of quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) in other states to better understand the quality measures used and supporting provider incentives. Following this, a quality demonstration project was commissioned to evaluate the current quality of Indiana's early learning providers and to make recommendations about how Indiana might amend Paths to QUALITY™ based on objective measures.
Capacity gaps are unclear due to a lacking understanding of family preferences regarding care settings.	• Systematically evaluate family choice to identify why they do or do not enroll their child in certain types of care settings or at different times in their development to inform Indiana's understanding of current capacity gaps and future capacity-building strategies.	Indiana commissioned two studies to better understand family preferences regarding care settings, care-finding behaviors and overall perceptions of quality. These findings have influenced several changes ranging from updates to the state's consumer education site to the launch of a modern-day marketplace for families to search for care.

Low rates of engagement and achievement in Paths to QUALITY™.	• Design new incentives for providers to participate in and advance through the Paths to QUALITY™ (quality rating and improvement system) framework. • Introduce new supports to assist programs in meeting quality standards.	As a result of the pandemic, Indiana did not introduce many new incentives. Still, it temporarily reduced requirements for participating providers as they struggled to operate through that period. Going forward, the state plans to introduce new incentives with its planned Paths to QUALITY™ refresh.
A need for increased kindergarten readiness and related supports.	• Institute a universal measure of kindergarten readiness. • Increase coordination between B-5 and K-12 systems for standards alignment, transitions and professional development.	The increased focus on kindergarten readiness and related child and family transitions led Indiana toward several milestones, including introducing the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators (KRI), an assessment used to measure select foundational skills needed for success in kindergarten, within Indiana's public pre-K program. While the assessment has faced implementation challenges due to system fragmentation and the pandemic, the collected data on student performance in foundational knowledge and skill areas has led to substantial outcomes. Finally, the establishment of the Office of Kindergarten Readiness within IDOE is another example of progress and learning from the needs assessment. The office was established based on a recognized need for greater focus on school readiness and partnership across systems.
Opportunity to improve child- and family-centered practices.	• Strengthen child- and family-centered practices through the introduction of new shared training opportunities, resources and other supports.	Since the completion of the 2018 needs assessment, Indiana's Child Care Resource and Referral network has worked with national and local experts to create a two-generational family engagement framework ("Child+"), inspired by guidance from the Aspen Institute, for the state. During the upcoming year, CCR&R agencies will continue to explore and strengthen their role as child care navigators and leverage community resources and partnerships as part of their work. Alongside this work, SPARK Learning Lab and the CCR&Rs have been working jointly on a family engagement initiative called The Power of "Peer" which stands for pause, engage, encourage and reflect. To date, 40 program leaders have completed the training with SPARK coaches also providing in-program workshops.

The findings from the 2018 needs assessment and the related actions taken by Indiana have helped deepen Indiana's understanding of the strengths and gaps of the system and informed its thinking around what knowledge and insights are needed next to support system advancement.

Updating Indiana's Statewide Needs Assessment: Much has changed in the B-5 system environment since Indiana's 2018 Comprehensive Needs Assessment was completed. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the B-5 system landscape, impacting access, affordability and quality, as well as children's learning progressions and family behaviors when it comes to finding and choosing care settings. The pandemic worsened an already fragile and difficult-to-solve workforce conundrum making it more important than ever that we deeply understand the issues and needs and design new solutions for them. Increased public focus on the sector has led to the commissioning of more national and local studies and assessments to better understand existing and emerging needs. And while our understanding of the varied issues plaguing the system has increased, we've not yet been able to look at them through a collective lens for a complete understanding of how they interact, nor have we identified the full range of potential solutions for addressing them. The national labor crisis has placed education further under a microscope and expanded the focus on early learning. This dynamic has increased expectations for child learning and readiness outcomes, yet we are just scratching the surface of what is needed to help the system meet these expectations. And finally, the increasing focus on equity and empowering all people for economic and lifelong success has heightened Indiana's focus on addressing systemic inequities and prioritizing support for those experiencing the greatest opportunity gaps in our society.

This context underscores why it's important for Indiana to update its needs assessment to understand more deeply how the system landscape has changed in recent years. While Indiana seeks to examine the complete state of the ECCE system, this new needs assessment will incorporate a stronger focus on underserved and marginalized child and family populations. In this, Indiana will examine the unique needs,

barriers and inequities faced by underserved child and family audiences in accessing and engaging with ECCE services in a post-pandemic environment. This includes care preferences, care-finding behaviors, access barriers, wraparound services, supports for addressing social and emotional needs and kindergarten readiness considerations. These topics are currently understudied, and Indiana stands to benefit the most from a deeper understanding of them to help inform and advance new policy objectives. Information gathered during this effort will help the agencies validate that planned focus areas align with families' true needs and values.

In completing this assessment, Indiana will combine and build on the findings of recently completed studies, which share important insights on the ECCE workforce, quality and accessibility. These include:

Study	Description
Early Learning Indiana's Closing the Gap Report	A 2021 report by Early Learning Indiana that uses a newly developed Early Learning Access index to qualify how well the current supply of ECCE services meets the population's needs. The methodology moves away from viewing access as a capacity supply and demand equation and layers in the additional components of quality, affordability and choice. These four elements, considered in context with one another, offer a more robust assessment of Hoosier families' ability to access early learning opportunities that suit their needs and preferences.
Indiana Business Research Center's Early Learning Workforce Study	A 2022 workforce study completed by Indiana Business Research Center that examines the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Indiana's ECCE workforce and related recovery trends across economic growth regions. The report shares insights related to employment trends, turnover rates and wage levels in a post-pandemic and inflationary environment and compares these findings with those of other industries likely to be drawing from the same labor pool. Additionally, the study highlights the pandemic's impact on statewide labor participation rates particularly on households with young children.
Family Awareness/ Perceptions of Early Learning Study	A July 2022 assessment, conducted by SMARI Research, of Indiana family sentiments and perceptions regarding ECCE services. The study examines how families of diverse backgrounds search for and find care options and their related search priorities. The study also includes insights into how families perceive the ECCE services currently available and provided to them in their communities and the related factors and criteria for evaluating care value and quality. Current unmet family needs are also included.
ECCE Workforce Study	As part of the needs assessment refresh, the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (INAEYC) plans to refresh its most recent workforce study. The report will examine the current status of the workforce, including demographics, qualifications, compensation and benefits, and highlight how the needs of the workforce have changed due to pandemic impact. The report will further investigate the overall strengths, gaps and

	opportunities of current attraction, preparation, support and retention efforts. These report findings will build on the Indiana Business Research Center's study and be incorporated into Indiana's comprehensive needs assessment.
Annual Technical Assistance Needs Assessment	A fall 2022 needs assessment completed by SPARK Learning Lab, a subsidiary of Shine Early Learning & the ECCE technical assistance vendor for the Indiana, gathers feedback regarding the most pressing professional development needs of ECCE leaders, educators and classroom support staff. In addition to prioritized topic areas, the survey collects information regarding preferred learning modalities and the availability of coaching services, locally offered professional development and peer learning communities. The most recent survey included expanded questions regarding the need and availability of mental health supports for children and families and the ECCE workforce.
Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Needs Assessment	An October 2022 assessment conducted by Purdue University of family and community awareness and utilization of CCR&R agencies to access child care and other related care-finding, cost and employment-related context. The study engaged 1,240 B-5 Hoosier families across 81 counties and 292 zip codes. Nearly 80% of survey respondents qualified for or were receiving financial assistance for child care. Due to the high percentage of underserved families that responded, this resource is particularly beneficial to leverage for the needs assessment. The report findings will help to inform the work of CCR&R agencies in support of this grant and broader B-5 system priorities.

The findings of the new needs assessment will ground Indiana and its partners in a current understanding of the system, focus stakeholders on the unique needs that exist for marginalized populations and inspire solutions that could be created to support these needs in Indiana. The agencies will partner with Purdue University to complete this assessment and engage a wide range of stakeholders in the assessment's planning, execution and review. These groups include families, Head Start programs, child care providers, home visiting programs, K-12 school districts, early intervention services, preschool special education programs, health and public health services, state and local government, and private entities. Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring representation from traditionally marginalized populations, such as those with limited English proficiency or disabilities and who live in high-poverty and rural areas. To do this, Indiana will leverage a system of local leaders and community partners including but not limited to ECCE providers, Head Start organizations, First Steps providers, early learning coalitions, regional advocacy groups, United Way organizations, community centers, faith-based organizations and more. These partners will be critical in both

communicating system planning efforts and involving a representative group of family and community stakeholders. The assessment will include a mixed approach for engaging these groups, including both quantitative surveys and assessments and qualitative engagements like 1:1 interviews, experience-mapping sessions, focus groups and facilitated discussions. Additional methods are also likely to be identified as the agencies begin communication and engagement efforts. Detailed milestones for this work are listed in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

ACTIVITY 2: UPDATE COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE B-5 STRATEGIC PLAN

Background on Indiana's Initial Strategic Plan: In 2019, following the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment, OECOSL convened a group of ECCE professionals representing providers, families and children, philanthropic institutions, nonprofits, businesses and community leaders – including those representing underserved communities – to review the identified needs of the B-5 system and develop a strategic plan for addressing them. OECOSL used a collaborative approach to gather input regarding the strengths, weaknesses and priorities of the B-5 system and then utilized the outputs to conduct more intensive planning in specific workgroups focused on priority areas. From this, Indiana's 2019 B-5 Strategic Plan was created. The plan consisted of 12 goals across the four priority areas listed below.

Grow High-Quality B-5 Programs	Support Transitions and Kindergarten Readiness	Promote B-5 Family and Community Engagement	Increase Collaboration in the B-5 Service Array Through Data
• Improve the quality of ECCE programs. • Increase high-quality programs. • Implement family-centered practices. • Reduce barriers for ECCE programs. • Develop a prepared ECCE workforce.	• Improve transitions to school. • Create and disseminate a "Top Five" needs for transitioning into kindergarten successfully, targeting families and early childhood care and education providers.	• Promote family engagement in B-5 programs. • Provide frameworks and tools for peer-to-peer networks. • Build local community partnerships.	• Establish inter-agency data sharing for family-focused services.

While Indiana was not a recipient of a 2019 PDG B-5 Renewal Grant, OECOSL and its partners determined it important to continue with some portions of its strategic plan. Due to limited funding and subsequent pandemic constraints, efforts were prioritized and shifted to a shared-ownership model. Prioritized efforts included:

- Improve the quality of ECCE programs by building upon Indiana's current definition of "high-quality" and updating Paths to QUALITY™ to connect quality standards to outcomes-driven standards.

- Empower the full array of agencies who serve birth-5 families to better serve their clients by developing and implementing family-centered, evidence-based policies, practices, processes and structures.

- Stabilize the ECCE network to provide consistent, high-quality child care and education for Hoosier families by reviewing the current B-5 infrastructure.

- Determine both formative and summative assessment options that inform ECCE teachers and families by providing information about the readiness of children to enter kindergarten. Use findings to inform resource allocation and policy decisions, training programs, and strengthen the system's curriculum development and instructional practices.

- Improve service delivery and reduce administrative duplication for families by increasing inter-agency collaboration and coordination through systems improvements and proactive data sharing via an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS).

Progress from Prior Strategic Plan: Improving the Quality of ECCE Programs: In 2021, Early Learning Indiana engaged the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) to conduct a quality demonstration project to evaluate the current quality of Indiana's early learning providers and to make recommendations about how Indiana might amend Paths to QUALITY™ based on objective measures. Through the initiative, NIEER studied more than 300 Indiana ECCE classrooms representing a mix of care settings, urbanicity and Paths to QUALITY™ levels and collected baseline data using the

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and many child-level measures. Based on the resulting data, Early Learning Indiana has offered participants an opportunity to invest in one of several responsive interventions, including instructionally-focused leadership development, tools to support early language development, and an assessment and professional development approach to improve early math teaching. NIEER will re-evaluate the classrooms following the implementation of the interventions, and results will be shared with ELAC as it works to make recommendations about the future of Paths to QUALITY™ in the first quarter of 2023. Recommending ways to strengthen Indiana's quality rating and improvement system for ECCE programs is part of ELAC's expanded scope.

Building Family Engagement: Since completing the 2018 strategic plan, Indiana has implemented several structural and process changes to better serve B-5 families. Perhaps the most notable, in late 2019, Indiana implemented the Early Ed Connect system, an easy-to-use online application that lets families apply for child care assistance programs. The system significantly streamlines the former process of applying for child care subsidies, which was wrought with barriers and undue burdens for families. This new process allows families to apply 24/7, apply for multiple children in a single application, easily upload supporting documents, access applications in multiple languages and receive real-time support for any questions they have.

Indiana's Child Care Resource and Referral network has worked with national and local experts to create a two-generational (2Gen) family engagement framework ("Child+"), inspired by guidance from the Aspen Institute, for the state. The whole-family, child-centered approach continues to be integrated into the work of the CCR&R network and positions CCR&R staff as navigators helping to bridge systems and leverage community resources to connect families with needed supports.

SPARK Learning Lab and the CCR&Rs have also worked to introduce the Power of PEER (Pause, Engage, Encourage and Reflect) program, a new family engagement approach created as a collaboration between SPARK Learning Lab and Shine Early Learning, part of Head Start network serving more than

5,000 children across the nation. (SPARK Learning Lab is a project of Shine Early Learning and serves as Indiana's ECCE technical assistance provider.) Through a three-part professional development series, ECCE educators explore strategies for engaging families in the instructional environment of the classroom and empowering them to extend that learning with their child at home through PEER Activity Cards. To date, all SPARK Learning Lab coaches have been trained, and more than 40 programs have completed the training.

Stabilizing the ECCE Network: Focus on improving Indiana's B-5 infrastructure increased notably during the pandemic, especially as providers struggled with operational stability. In 2021, Early Learning Indiana launched its "Stronger Together" initiative to pilot regional shared services hubs that provide economies of administrative scale while enabling providers to focus on the business of teaching and learning. Seven regional hubs representing nearly one-third of all Indiana counties are working to meet the diverse needs of providers in their communities. The hubs offer services ranging from common child care management software to shared human resources supports to a collaborative substitute teacher pool. These promising practices are now being expanded to new regions, and model hubs are growing to include more participating providers.

Additionally, in 2022, with support from OECOSL and private philanthropic investments, the Early Learning Marketplace was launched. This online market allows providers to post and families to reserve available early learning seats in real time. Utilization is free for both providers and families, funded through the support of a local philanthropic institution. After three months of operation, more than 400 providers are participating in the Marketplace, with hundreds more on the path to participation. Family marketing efforts have reached more than 25,000 families statewide, and more than 300 messages have already been exchanged between families and providers through the platform. The Marketplace will be promoted to families who qualify for child care subsidy through eligibility determination offices as another support channel for locating child care alongside CCR&Rs.

Monitoring Kindergarten Readiness: In 2019, the Indiana State Board of Education adopted the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators (KRI). The assessment is meant to measure selected foundational academic skills needed for success in kindergarten to collect aggregated data on kindergarten readiness for Indiana's public pre-K program, On My Way Pre-K. The KRI aims to assess children's understanding of six oral language, literacy and math skills in the spring before kindergarten entry. Previous research has shown that the six skills evaluated in the KRI contribute to a student's future academic success. Results from the KRI can help educators and policymakers understand how students who have participated in On My Way Pre-K enter kindergarten compared to national norms established for higher-income children.

In spring 2021, the KRI was administered to approximately 1,600 4-year-olds enrolled in the On My Way Pre-K program (65% of program enrollment and approximately 2% of 4-year-olds in the state), representing 55 Indiana counties. Additionally, earlier this year, Indiana published its first Kindergarten Readiness Indicators results and a multi-year longitudinal study of children who have accessed early learning services through the On My Way Pre-K program. The study found that participants have stronger school readiness and more developed language and literacy skills than their peers who attended lower-quality programs. Yet, the benefits were modest, and no difference was noted in many other assessed skills like self-regulation, social and behavioral competence, executive functioning and mathematics. Additionally, the KRI results indicated that only 5% of children scored at or above the target on all four assessed oral language and literacy skills, and 25% met or exceeded all targets for math.

Improve Service Delivery and Inter-Agency Coordination: Lastly, in August 2021, OECOSL launched a significant effort to modernize its internal operating systems using the Salesforce platform. OECOSL engaged Deloitte Consulting to assist in the design of the new system, focusing on improving business processes, enhancing end-user experiences, and strengthening data management and quality practices. As part of the project, OECOSL is working toward establishing unique identifiers for children accessing support

services to improve inter-agency coordination and data sharing. Additionally, an API is also being created as part of the systems effort. The API will support increased data sharing across ECCE and K-12 systems to support kindergarten transitions and monitor long-term learning outcomes.

Key Learnings and Takeaways: Although the pandemic hindered and slowed the success of some of Indiana's planned efforts, the experience brought about important learnings for both the FSSA and IDOE agencies. The pandemic highlighted the necessity of a stronger operational base from which to build, leading Indiana to step back and consider the different regulatory and structural supports that should be established as prerequisites for quality building. The pandemic also deepened our understanding of the need to develop more sustainable care models to support different geographies. For example, it drove home the importance of provider networks (e.g., staffed family child care networks) to reinforce smaller providers and micro-center or single classroom sites as high-potential models for increasing access in rural geographies. While showing growth potential, the KRI results have underscored the need to increase the use of evidence-based curriculum and ensure they are implemented with fidelity within programs, as well as building ECCE/K-12 coordination to improve kindergarten readiness and instructional practice. And finally, the lacking and incomplete level of available data to help inform decision-making throughout the pandemic has only accelerated Indiana's focus on instituting a comprehensive data system and supporting quality practices.

Refreshing Indiana's B-5 Strategic Plan: With these learnings and the findings of a more current needs assessment, the joint agencies of FSSA's OECOSL and IDOE intend to re-engage stakeholders in developing a refreshed B-5 strategic plan. In this, the agencies and statewide stakeholders will review the system's current state against the former strategic plan and the recently developed ELAC priorities to confirm areas of focus, identify areas that may need to evolve and create a final consolidated plan. In this review, the agencies expect to see both initial goals validated and new ones emerge. Additionally, unlike in 2019, when Indiana was very much focused on identifying the system's issues, stakeholders today are much more grounded in that context,

helping the conversation naturally shift toward meaningful system-level solutions. Indiana sees the process of refreshing the strategic plan as an accelerant to the progress already underway in the state and an opportunity to further strengthen partner alignment.

In the new plan, the agencies expect to see a heightened focus on strengthening and growing the ECCE workforce through new entry points and pathways, addressing systemic inequities for underserved families and communities through new supports and wraparound services, and improving the overall quality of programs within the B-5 mixed delivery system. Additionally, the agencies plan to amplify the voice of families through a new policy advisory group and embed a greater focus on the system's ultimate goal of preparing children, and their families, for success in kindergarten. Indiana also plans to expand and deepen the measures used to monitor progress on the plan, building critical transparency and accountability.

Like in the last strategic planning process, the agencies will again engage a diverse and representative set of stakeholders, placing additional emphasis on representation from underserved and marginalized populations. To do this, Indiana will leverage a system of local leaders and community partners, including but not limited to ECCE providers, Head Start organizations, First Steps providers, early learning coalitions, regional advocacy groups, United Way organizations, community centers, faith-based organizations and more. These partners will be critical in communicating system planning efforts and involving a representative group of family and community stakeholders. Additionally, Indiana will use a mixed approach for engaging these groups, including quantitative research surveys and assessments and qualitative engagements like 1:1 interviews, town hall forums, experience-mapping sessions, focus groups and facilitated discussions. Additional methods are also likely to be identified as the agencies begin communication and engagement efforts. Detailed milestones for this work are included in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

ACTIVITY 3: MAXIMIZE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN THE B-5 SYSTEM

Recent Progress Toward Increasing Family Engagement: Families are children's first and most important teachers, shaping how they think, act and view the world every day. In recent years, Indiana and its partners

have increased their collective focus on enhancing family engagement and access to the B-5 system to empower families and support healthy child development and school readiness. Efforts have ranged from facilitating family studies and helping families understand how they can work to build foundational readiness skills at home, to investing in the creation of modernized services and support to help engage today's young family audience. Specific examples of these efforts include:

- Implementing the new Early Ed Connect system to make applying for child care assistance easier and more convenient. To date, more than 77,790 applications have been submitted through the platform.

- Commissioning two recent studies of the current state of family's care-finding needs, preferences, search behaviors and perceptions to help inform outreach and capacity-building efforts. These studies have engaged more than 2,000 families to share critical insights that are informing Indiana's ECCE capacity- and quality-building efforts.

- Bringing the factor of choice into data analyses and capacity-building efforts. Early Learning Indiana's Closing the Gap Report introduced a new methodology for qualifying and quantifying child care access throughout Indiana, layering in for the first time the factors of affordability and family choice.

- Investing in the refresh of Brighter Futures Indiana, the state's consumer education website, to better align the site's design, content and educational resources with the needs and preferences of today's young families. More than 150,000 new users visited the site in 2021. Additionally, 23,000 contacts have been made to the Brighter Futures Solution Center to find care and access education and resources. Indiana's recent revamp of the data structure of the support center is helping to yield greater insight into the needs and concerns of families.

- Launching the new Early Learning Marketplace, an online market that allows families to search for and reserve available early learning seats in real-time. Families can view detailed information about the program, including hours of operation, quality level, services and amenities offered, the curriculum

used, etc., as well as view family ratings and comments. Family marketing efforts launched in October 2022 and have already reached more 25,000 families. Additionally, nearly 300 messages have been exchanged between families and providers through the platform.

- Engaging child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies in a two-generational family engagement model (Child+) and related practices to support and empower children and families in their communities. Inspired by guidance from the Aspen Institute, the whole-family, child-centered approach has become into the work of the system and positions CCR&R staff as navigators helping to bridge systems and leverage community resources to connect families with needed supports.

- Updating family engagement policies, practices and communications as part of OECOSL's new data system implementation. To support this work, Indiana is considering either expanding the two-generational ("Child+") family engagement model used by Indiana's CCR&R network.

While these are all positive steps forward, stakeholders recognize that it's just the start of the work needed to promote and maximize family engagement.

Indiana's Approach to Deepening Family Engagement: Research shows that families play a critical role in building early learning skills and shaping children's expectations for school. With the support of this grant, Indiana plans to build recognition for the critical role families play within Indiana's B-5 system and deepen strategies for engaging and supporting them in helping their children succeed. Specific strategies for this includes: 1) forming a family policy advisory group to elevate the voice of families in policymaking, 2) launching a family education campaign to provide resources for early learning and development and promote the critical role families play in child development, 3) evaluating structures and processes for determining eligibility for child care assistance and establishing user-centered systems and approaches that improve service and build equity, 4) expanding access supports for B-5 families for whom English is their second language (ESL family populations), and 5) strengthening child and family transition transitions from ECCE

to kindergarten. In this work, Indiana intends to leverage the full breadth of expertise across agencies and build upon scientifically-based research and established best practices. The joint agencies of FSSA's OECOSL and IDOE expect that the updated needs assessment and strategic plan will further inform the planning and design of the proposed strategies in this activity area. Importantly, families and partners will be directly involved in the planning, execution and ongoing monitoring and compensated for their time. Detailed milestones for all strategies included in this application are listed in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

Strategy	Planning and Implementation Partners	Expected Outcomes
Establish a family policy advisory group to amplify the voice of families in policymaking. Policies and procedures will be established to ensure regular engagement. The group will represent the full diversity of Indiana's B-5 mixed delivery system.	OECOSL, IDOE, B-5 families, ELAC, CCR&R network, local coalitions, Head Start State Collaboration Office, First Steps	Increased number of policy and implementation decisions made based on family input.
Partner with the Clinton Foundation's Too Small to Fail early learning initiative to launch a statewide public awareness and action campaign, "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing", to surround families with early language and learning opportunities, and provide them with resources to talk, read and sing with young children from birth to help prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond. The campaign will partner with trusted messengers to share information with families about the critical role they play in their child's development, as well as tools to help them engage in language-rich activities with their children. Resources will surround educating families on the developmental milestones and ways to support children's learning outcomes at home. Families will also receive guidance on navigating concerns about their children's development and inform them of available IDEA services. Campaign and educational resources will be delivered in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner with supports embedded into B-5 systems for long-term access (e.g., incorporated into online technical assistance platform for providers).	OECOSL, IDOE, Clinton Foundation, B-5 families, CCR&R network, local coalitions, First Steps, Indiana ECCE providers, Head Start State Collaboration Office, SPARK Learning Lab	Improved family awareness of the critical role they play in their child's development and increased engagement in activities to help developing early language and learning skills that prepare their child for success in school.

Evaluate structures and processes for determining eligibility for child care subsidies and establish user-centered systems and approaches that improve service and build equity. Promote continuity of care and institute connections and common eligibility practices with other family support programs (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, TANF). This part of the strategy also is reflected in Bonus Area 1 of the grant application. Ensure broad family input and representation in evaluation, design and implementation phases.	OECOSL, IDOE, third party consulting firm to support research and process mapping, B-5 families, inter-agency representations for TANF, SNAP and Medicaid, eligibility determination offices, CCR&R network, ECCE providers, First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office	Increased system access and improved service experiences for underserved family populations.
Increase access to B-5 services for Indiana's ESL population by expanding education and resources provided in culturally and linguistically appropriate methods. This effort includes making existing education and resources more accessible through translation, improved channel delivery or new formats, as well as addressing other population-specific needs.	OECOSL, IDOE, CCR&R network (Early Learning Indiana and CCR&R agencies)	Improved access to B-5 programs and services for Indiana's ESL population.
Develop a statewide plan for increasing the intentionality of child and family transitions from ECCE settings into kindergarten, leveraging cross-agency expertise. This includes establishing shared transition values, creating standardized practices and identifying needed supports for children, families and educators. Additionally, Indiana will consider the role out-of-school time programs could play in strengthening readiness and transitions in the school year and summer before kindergarten entry. Establish a cohort of programs to implement recommendations.	OECOSL, IDOE, B-5 families, CCR&R network, First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office, local school system experts, SPARK Learning Lab, Indiana Afterschool Network, ECCE providers	Strengthened child and family readiness for the transition to school and related expectations.

ACTIVITY 4: SUPPORT THE B-5 WORKFORCE AND DISSEMINATE BEST PRACTICES

State of the Workforce: Across Indiana and throughout the country, there is a meager and dwindling supply of qualified ECCE workers. This insufficient supply has its roots in inadequate compensation ranges, suboptimal teacher preparation methods, and outmoded workforce structures. In the first six months of the COVID-19 outbreak, when programs closed or reduced their capacity, national sources cite that the ECCE workforce shrunk by 20% as nearly 200,000 child care workers lost their jobs. These job losses marked one of the most significant recessions across any job category in the U.S. Studies continue to show that the current growth recovery of the workforce is not substantial enough to compensate for the pandemic decline, making

it hard for states to recoup pre-pandemic capacity. Adding to Indiana's challenges is that pre-pandemic workforce levels were already insufficient to meet the sector's needs.

A recent labor assessment conducted by the Indiana University Business Research Center (IBRC) echoes these findings for Indiana. It shows that Indiana workforce recovery lags even further behind national averages, with urban areas seeing the most significant challenges. For example, while Indiana child care employment has reached 97% of its pre-pandemic level, Marion County has only recovered 90% of workers. Furthermore, the assessment of economic growth regions across Indiana shows that the ECCE workforce here in the state is still grappling with a high degree of employee turnover and has had a slower recovery than comparison industries likely to draw from the same labor pool. The strain from this continued staffing effect can be seen here in Indiana by the growing share of providers who report operating at a decreased capacity due to staffing shortages. While all providers have been impacted by this dynamic, centers and ministries are proportionally more affected by workforce shortages, with nearly 60% of these providers responding that they are now operating at a decreased capacity. In July 2022, center and ministry providers reported an average of 30 seats forfeited due to reduced workforce capacity, a more than seven-seat increase since November 2021. Furthermore, any compensation gains made pre-pandemic or as part of rebuilding the post-pandemic workforce have almost certainly eroded due to inflation. Despite record-level wage increases, ECCE workers remain among the lowest-paid workers in all job categories here in the state according to the recent IBRC workforce study. The same study noted that between 2019 and 2021 roles like telemarketers and substitute teachers saw wage increases of over 55%, in comparison, ECCE wages increased only 6.5%.

Recent Workforce Investments: Even before the pandemic, Indiana had become increasingly focused on solving the ECCE workforce challenge. The 2019 Strategic Plan called for the development a comprehensive plan for addressing the challenge, including strengthening attraction efforts and developing new pathways into the field. However, Indiana halted most of the work during the pandemic as it shifted its efforts toward

helping providers retain or restore their existing workforce ahead of longer-term improvements. Through federal relief funds, including CARES, CRRSA and ARPA, the state provided the following support:

- Continued child care subsidy payments and support for COVID-related business interruptions throughout the early months of the pandemic to assist providers in continuing to pay and retain workers. More than $75M of the state's CARES funds were invested in these efforts.

- $400 hiring and onboarding stipend issued to programs for each new team member hired. In addition, during this same period, Indiana waived the cost of new hire background checks for providers. In total, $7.5M of CRRSA funds were issued in waived background check fees and hiring stipends to support programs in rebuilding their workforce, with funds supporting over 16,000 new hires.

- Non-competitive Stabilization Grants were designed to provide short-term funding to ECCE and out-of-school-time programs that faced increased costs due to the pandemic. Providers were required to use at least 25% of the grant funding on increasing staff wages and benefits. $540M was issued in stabilization grants, with $135M representing the minimum 25% dedicated to workforce initiatives.

- The *Build, Learn, Grow* Building Wellness initiative aims to address the increasing wellness-related needs of the ECCE workforce, with hundreds of providers and workers accessing the program since its launch in spring 2022. Indiana invested $505K to support the shared employee assistance program, which offers free, short-term counseling, legal and financial consultation, work-life assistance and crisis intervention services, is sponsored by OECOSL in partnership with SPARK Learning Lab.

While these efforts have helped to provide short-term support for providers, they do not represent the comprehensive, system-level solutions needed to strengthen the ECCE workforce long-term.

Supporting Indiana's ECCE Workforce: Strengthening the ECCE workforce is paramount to ensuring that the youngest Hoosiers are prepared with the foundational knowledge and skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. With the support of this grant, Indiana plans to implement the following strategies for

strengthening and better supporting the ECCE workforce: 1) encouraging new workforce models, 2) establishing a workforce development and innovation fund to build the capacity of local and regional partners to provide credential-aligned programming, 3) enhancing ECCE career and technical education programs, 4) streamlining and reducing barriers in the ECCE regulatory environment, 5) encouraging business efficiencies through operational capacity-building grants, and 6) instituting a shared applicant tracking system to build recruitment efforts. Together, OECOSL and IDOE will leverage their collective expertise, along with research and best practices, to further inform the planning and implementation of these efforts. Detailed milestones for all strategies included in this application are listed in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

Strategy	Planning and Implementation Partners	Expected Outcomes
Design and implement a strategy to encourage new workforce training models for career entry and advancement (e.g., competency-based credentials and pathways, including career technical education in high-school). Leverage portable and stackable credentials, apprenticeships and regional sector-based job-embedded training.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, INAEYC, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Indiana Higher Education Forum, Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Early Learning Indiana, SPARK Learning Lab	Increased entry points into the field and strengthened career pathways for ECCE workers.
Establish a workforce development and innovation fund to build the capacity of local and regional partners to provide credential-aligned programming. Entities may apply for assistance in developing new or scaling existing programs and securing financial assistance for program participation. Prioritize linguistic and culturally supportive pathways and approaches that provide participants with the opportunity to earn a wage while completing education and training.	OECOSL, IDOE, Indiana Department of Workforce Development, INAEYC, local and regional workforce partners	Increased number of workers prepared to work in the ECCE field.
Strengthen Indiana's ECCE career and technical education (CTE) model. Conduct research on promising models inside and outside ECCE and use findings to develop an innovative model for Indiana. Leverage new competency-based, job-embedded workforce models to make ECCE careers more attractive for students and promote as an entry point to	OECOSL, IDOE, third party entity to support research and model design, INAEYC, Ivy Tech Community College, local high school career and technical education programs, Indiana Department of	Strengthened pipeline of early career professionals entering into the ECCE field.

the broader education field. Pilot in at least two school districts representing both rural and urban settings.	Workforce Development, Indiana Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Head Start State Collaboration Office	
Build upon current initiatives to streamline the regulatory process to support improved provider participation and operations. Act on the recommendations of ELAC and Indiana's recently established provider workgroup to reconcile requirements, remove barriers, eliminate inequities and update related licensing systems (e.g., increasing automations, streamlining reporting and compliance requirements, etc.). Ensure incorporation of linguistic and culturally supportive structures and practices.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, small business associations, local coalitions, CCR&R network, SPARK Learning Lab, Early Learning Indiana	Strengthened operating environment to support new and existing ECCE providers.
Offer one-time operational capacity-building grants to ECCE networks and programs to address administrative burdens and inefficiencies and redirect focus back to learning. Connect effort to recently developed shared service hubs. In the application, providers will be asked to describe how addressing issues will allow them and/or their staff to redirect focus toward learning and monitoring methods.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, Licensing Advisory Group, Early Learning Indiana, Stronger Together regional shared service hubs, SPARK Learning Lab, Regional Advisory Councils	Improved child learning outcomes as a result of increased time spent on instruction versus operational inefficiencies.
Expand the use of Nimble, a shared applicant tracking system offered by IDOE to K-12 school districts statewide, to the ECCE sector to strengthen the field's currently fragmented recruiting efforts. The platform streamlines recruitment efforts for providers by hosting common applications, template role postings and a shared pool of applicants. Potential workers submit a single application and are matched with open roles aligning with their job search priorities. Providers also have access to data dashboards to better assess candidates and make hiring decisions.	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, INAEYC, CCR&Rs, Head Start State Collaboration Office, First Steps	Streamlined recruitment processes and deepened candidate pools.

Additional strategies related to workforce supports are referenced later in this application under Bonus Area 2 (Compensation) and Bonus Area 3 (Inclusive Care Settings). These areas include increased scholarship funding to support new and existing ECCE workers to participate in programs allowing them to earn and learn or immediately receive wage increases upon completion and pilots for increasing compensation

and working conditions within the sector. Other features include expanded professional development in trauma-informed approaches for educators and increased supports for programs to create inclusive care environments. In granting scholarships, Indiana will prioritize efforts that build workforce supply in underserved parts of the state and will work with a network of community partners to do so. Through its participation in the workforce technical assistance and peer-learning groups, Indiana will share promising practices piloted in the state, while also implementing successful practices from other states.

ACTIVITY 5: SUPPORT PROGRAM QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

State of Quality in Indiana's B-5 System: Paths to QUALITY™ is Indiana's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The system is voluntary and consists of four levels, each building on the foundation of the previous one. While all programs participating in Paths to QUALITY™ meet essential health and safety standards, those with higher levels do more to support child learning.

Currently, only 64% of licensed Indiana ECCE providers participate in Paths to QUALITY™, a 13% drop since 2018, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in participation has come mainly from PTQ Level 1 and 2 providers who struggled to meet the program's workforce requirements. While the total number of providers participating in Indiana's QRIS framework has decreased, a recent analysis demonstrated that the capacity of all currently participating programs grew by approximately 7% over this same period. Additionally, the capacity of programs achieving a high-quality rating has increased by 6%.

According to Early Learning Indiana's 2022 Closing the Gap report, the percentage of high-quality capacity statewide has grown slightly year over year to 46.4%. Currently, 28.4% of young children in Indiana can be served through high-quality capacity. While most Indiana counties saw increases in their high-quality capacity throughout 2022, more than 70% of counties only have enough to serve up to 25% of area children, and one county continues to lack any high-quality capacity.

While the capacity-related effects of the workforce shortfall are immediately realized, the quality implications for the system are not yet fully understood. In recent months, it has been challenging for Indiana

and its partners to capture providers' interest in improvement efforts, as staff who might typically be working on such efforts are helping to staff classrooms. Furthermore, to sustain capacity, providers are hiring less-experienced staff, frequently drawing from completely unrelated industries. In response to the daily demands of ratio requirements, these candidates often receive minimal training before entering a classroom. These concessions will undoubtedly influence learning outcomes and other quality measures for years to come.

To better understand family perceptions of quality, recent studies were commissioned to examine the factors influencing families' decisions about early learning. One such study conducted by Early Learning Indiana found that less than half of respondents had confidence in their understanding of what constitutes a high-quality environment, and only approximately one-third ranked a program's quality as the most critical factor in selection. Nearly 60% of respondents were unfamiliar with Paths to QUALITY™, and only 17% noted having chosen a program using Paths to QUALITY™. While not particularly motivated by participation in Paths to QUALITY™, families were very motivated by many factors representing hallmarks of high-quality programs. The five most motivating factors were the health and safety of the program, the responsiveness of caregivers, support for social and emotional development, access to developmentally appropriate materials, and whether the program is preparing the child for kindergarten.

An important corollary to this quality discussion is an understanding of the learning outcomes being achieved by the early learning system. For too long, the work of the early education sector has occurred without much data to help inform efforts to level the playing field, particularly concerning the relative impact of early learning experiences across income levels and race and ethnicity. Earlier this year, when Indiana published its first Kindergarten Readiness Indicators (KRI) results and a multi-year longitudinal study of children who have accessed early learning services through the On My Way Pre-K program, the study found that participants who attended higher-quality programs did have stronger academic outcomes but the benefits were modest. Additionally, the KRI results indicated that only 5% of children scored at or above target on all

four assessed oral language and literacy skills, and 25% met or exceeded all targets for math. Generally, girls performed higher than boys, white children performed higher than children of other racial backgrounds and children who attended family child care homes performed higher than other care settings. While the KRI aims to assess children's understanding of six oral language, literacy and math skills, it does not measure a broader set of qualitative skills needed for kindergarten entry, such as social-emotional strengths. The KRI results and longitudinal study are discussed more extensively in the Activity 2: Update B-5 Strategic Plan section.

The above findings, coupled with the fact that the Paths to QUALITY™ system is now more than a decade old and does not correlate to nationally recognized measures, makes refreshing the quality framework a key priority for Indiana. Before the pandemic, Indiana recognized changes were needed but was not contemplating the level of change it's now considering. In recent years, Indiana has focused mainly on keeping providers in the PTQ program by offering temporary waivers for operational and workforce requirements to avoid further participation declines. However, current realities make it critical for Indiana to reassess the system in light of the challenges faced and the advancements made across states in QRIS systems and design for a new day. While PDG funds will help Indiana design and launch the new system, Indiana's CCDF quality dollars and other private ECCE funding will be used to sustain quality-improvement efforts over time. This approach will ensure resources are maximized and not duplicated.

Strengthening Program Quality in the State: With the support of this grant, Indiana intends to deploy critical quality-building strategies including: 1) building and deploying a new assessment system to measure all domains of early learning, 2) updating Indiana's QRIS system to incorporate objective measures of quality and current understanding of quality practices, 3) establishing an approved list of high-quality ECCE curriculum, 4) offering financial supports for providers to purchase curriculum and implement with fidelity within their programs, 5) piloting strategies for improving early literacy skill development for underserved populations, and 6) building ECCE and K-12 system collaboration and alignment through shared professional

development opportunities. Importantly, these qualities expand on the operational capacity-building work cited in the workforce section. From the pandemic, Indiana learned that working from a strong operational base is critical for programs to focus and dedicate time to improving quality and learning outcomes. The agencies will vet strategies contained in this application with the needs assessment and ECCE best practices. Detailed milestones for these strategies are included in the Project Timeline and Milestones section.

Strategy	Planning and Implementation Partners	Expected Outcomes
Build and deploy an assessment system that effectively measures all domains of early learning across the birth-to-five system.	OEOCSL, IDOE, ELAC, State Board of Education, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten educators, third party assessment experts, assessment provider	Strengthened and more comprehensive understanding of children's early knowledge and skill development for kindergarten.
Update the Paths to QUALITY™ rating system to incorporate objective measures of quality drawn from the assessment system and to reflect current understanding of quality practices. Incentivize increased workforce compensation, lower adult-child staffing ratios, family engagement, quality transitions and job-embedded professional development. Promote accountability, transparency and ease of use.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, Paths to QUALITY™ Policy Committee, B-5 families, INAEYC, Purdue University, regional provider cohorts	Strengthened program quality and improved child and family outcomes.
Commission a panel review of leading, high-quality ECCE curricula. Identify an approved listing of curricular options for Paths to QUALITY™ providers to choose from and implement within their program. Offer grant opportunities to assist in the purchase, implementation and ongoing utilization of curriculum.	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, INAEYC, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Purdue University	Strengthened instructional practice and supports in ECCE programs and classrooms.
Offer quality improvement grants to support providers in purchasing and implementing approved curriculum. Grant funds will also support costs associated with	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, INAEYC	Strengthened child learning outcomes.

ongoing improvement and/or support in using curriculum.		
Commission a curriculum review and pilot study of ECCE programs (e.g., community-based programs, public pre-K, Head Start programs) operating in the catchment areas of school districts identified and prioritized by IDOE for the Science of Reading cadre, a group of 12 school districts identified by IDOE as benefiting from instructional coaching and professional development support to improve special population IREAD scores. In the study, assess the current strengths and gaps of providers in supporting children's early literacy skill development and pilot new instructional supports aligned to Science of Reading practices.	OECOSL, IDOE, Head Start State Collaboration Office, INAEYC	Improved early literacy skill development for kindergarten.
Increase joint planning and professional development opportunities for ECCE, out-of-school time and K-12 elementary school leaders and educators to learn from one another, collaborate and increase coordination. Activities may include shared professional development summits, online training modules, shadowing experiences, alignment and planning workshops, data reviews, virtual collaboration tools and professional learning communities. Prioritize kindergarten readiness as the focus of these opportunities.	OECOSL, IDOE, ECCE providers, elementary educators, out-of-school time providers, First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Indiana Early Childhood Education Forum, SPARK Learning Lab, Indiana Afterschool Network, national subject matter experts	Increased alignment in instructional practice to support child learning outcomes.

ACTIVITY 6: SUBGRANTS TO ENHANCE QUALITY AND EXPAND ACCESS

The capacity of Indiana's ECCE system has grown by approximately 12,000 seats since 2019, aided in part by private philanthropic investments, namely those made by Lilly Endowment Inc. The Endowment has and continues to play a vital role in building the capacity and quality of the B-5 system as a close partner of Indiana. According to Early Learning Indiana's 2022 Closing the Gap update, Indiana's Early Learning Access Index, (which analyzes child care access throughout Indiana) rose from 60.6 in 2021 to 62.2 in 2022, signaling both a growth in overall capacity and high-quality capacity. During the report period, nearly three-fourths of counties saw growth in their Access Index score, while the remaining quarter saw a decline. Among those counties experiencing Access Index improvements, the average increase was 5.13 points, whereas, among counties witnessing a drop in the Access Index, the average decline was less than 3 points.

Capacity growth efforts have come through a mix of one-time federal funding to help providers grow their footprint and private funding to address new and longstanding care gaps. As part of Indiana's child care stabilization grants, supported by ARPA, providers could invest funds toward offsetting operating costs and have the financial capacity to consider growing. Additionally, private funding opportunities have been made available in recent years to help new providers enter the market or existing ones to expand capacity.

Statewide, the capacity sufficiency rate stands at 61.2%, meaning Indiana can now serve more than six of every 10 children likely to need care. While some counties have more than enough capacity (though not high-quality capacity) to meet the needs of local families, 65% of counties have capacity sufficiency rates under 50%. Of particular concern is the state of access to infant and toddler care. Based on recent estimates, the median capacity sufficiency rate for infants and toddlers statewide is only 36%.

Enhancing Quality and Expanding Access to ECCE Programs: Over the coming years, Indiana intends to work collaboratively with its partners to address the geographical and age group gaps that remain in our state, while simultaneously increasing the overall quality of ECCE programs throughout the state. Indiana requests funds to support direct grants to providers for supply- and quality-building efforts. These include grant opportunities to support new and existing provider growth in specific underserved areas of the state, including both high-poverty and rural settings, and quality improvement grants to support ECCE providers in securing and implementing evidence-based curriculum.

Indiana will model its supply-building grant effort after a recently developed $10M publicly-funded grant made possible through SEA2, which provides child care funding designed to help new and existing providers build seat capacity statewide. Through the grant effort, providers can apply for funding in two categories: Existing Site Expansion/Update or New Site Creation. In both categories, providers must explain how the expansion or repositioning effort helps to meet or address local family demands (e.g., waitlist information, local supply and market data, historical enrollment data, etc.) Grants of up to $120K will be available to

eligible providers who submit successful applications for the Existing Site Update/Expansion category. Additionally, grants of up to $300K will be available to awardees under the New Site Creation category. Providers must currently be or commit to becoming high quality by their opening to be eligible. Indiana will monitor compliance through existing PTQ compliance and reporting structures. Evaluators will prioritize those programs seeking to significantly increase access for subsidy families and/or address care gaps in underserved and rural geographies. With the support of existing federal and state funds and the PDG Renewal Grant, Indiana seeks to launch the grant opportunity in the first half of 2023 and create a total of 2,000 new ECCE seats across the state. Indiana will leverage Early Learning Indiana's Closing the Gap report to identify prioritized areas of the state, including high-poverty and rural areas. Indiana will leverage partners to help engage new and existing providers in hard-to-reach areas and encourage diverse models of care.

Further, Indiana will invest another portion of its funds toward increasing the overall quality of programs, providing grant funds that will enable providers to purchase and implement approved instructional curricula and access ongoing coaching supports. This grant opportunity exists as a complement to the development of high-quality curricular options for participating Paths to QUALITY™ providers that is included in Activity 5: Support Program Quality Improvement. Indiana will identify options for providers to choose from and offer grant opportunities to assist in the purchase, implementation and ongoing utilization of curriculum. This grant effort is slated to roll out in Q1 or Q2 of 2024 following the creation of Indiana's new assessment approach and an approved menu of curricula for participating Paths to QUALITY™ providers.

Strategy	Planning and Implementation Partners	Expected Outcomes
Subgrant Option A & B: Make available supply-building grants to new and/or existing providers to expand high-quality seat capacity in targeted geographies. Offer grants as an enhancement or extension to SEA2 grant efforts. (i.e., offering a second round of grant opportunities to support providers who did not apply in the first round but now have sufficient capacity for success)	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, CCR&R network	Increased access to high-quality ECCE services in tunserved areas of the state.

Subgrant Option C: Offer quality improvement grants to support providers in purchasing and implementing approved instructional curriculum. Grant funds will also support costs associated with ongoing improvement and/or support in using curriculum.	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, INAEYC	Strengthened child learning outcomes.

BONUS AREAS

COORDINATED APPLICATION, ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT FOR FAMILIES

Child care subsidies and other safety net programs are critical for the well-being of low-income families, including families' economic success and children's development. Research shows that states' policy and implementation practices for these programs often create barriers to accessing and retaining these scarce benefits, including child care subsidies that help ensure children receive continuous care in stable, quality settings. Growing recognition of these barriers has led many states to simplify and improve access to and retention of child care subsidies while aligning those processes with other programs offering essential work support. States have deployed changes in policy and practice in several ways, including simplifying eligibility determination, reporting requirements and verification, lengthening certification periods, changing eligibility thresholds, adjusting copayment schedules and implementing standard eligibility determination technology. These efforts have helped to strengthen access to and retention of critical benefits for children and families, and they have also created internal efficiencies and data improvements for states.

With one in four Hoosiers enrolling in at least one program or service offered by Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), including Medicaid, TANF and SNAP, and a significant percentage of them seeking/qualifying for child care subsidy, OECOSL sees common eligibility practices as a critical strategy for strengthening access to support for underserved children and families. Indiana has made recent progress in this area by implementing an online application system for families, Early Ed Connect, and a new data system which will incorporate unique child identifiers, both of which help set Indiana on a path for being ready for further comprehensive system change.

With the support of this grant, Indiana plans to engage outside support to complete a landscape review of states with combined eligibility systems to help determine what might be possible for Indiana. In this effort, Indiana will leverage its work in Activity 3: Maximize Family Engagement in the B-5 System, which focuses on family experience mapping and creating a roadmap for reducing barriers and undue burdens, to inform this work. OECOSL will then share the findings with FSSA leadership and other divisions to discuss and create a plan for a unified one-door eligibility process for CCDF, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and Head Start.

Strategy	Implementation and Planning Partners	Expected Outcomes
Complete a landscape analysis of states with combined eligibility systems and practices. Use findings from landscape analysis to discuss and create a plan for a unified one-door eligibility process for Medicaid, CCDF and TANF. Consider Head Start eligibility connections also.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, Head Start State Collaboration Office, third party entity to support research/model design, eligibility determination offices, Division of Family Resources, Office of Medicaid Policy & Planning, United Way	Clear plan for how Indiana will work to create a unified one-door eligibility process.

IMPROVING WORKFORCE COMPENSATION

Across Indiana, there is increasing demand for high-quality ECCE services. And while the supply of workers is rising, the growth rate is insufficient to recoup the losses stemming from the pandemic and present-day employment growth. Here in Indiana, the ECCE workforce recovery rate lags behind national averages, yet in almost every region of Indiana, openings for child care workers have outpaced all job categories with metro areas being the slowest to recover. For example, Indiana child care employment has reached 97% of its pre-pandemic level, but Marion County has only recovered 90% of workers. While the causes of the current workforce shortage are many, such as poor working conditions, lacking career pathways and stressful work environments, the most significant recruitment challenge is low worker compensation levels and benefits. Even with record wage increases and recruitment/retention incentives in recent years (which have been mostly offset by high inflation), ECCE workers still rank among the lowest-paid workers, only seeing a 6.5% increase in wages since 2019.

Recognizing the critical nature of the ECCE workforce to their short- and long-term economy, states are increasingly focused on addressing this compensation issue and ensuring educators receive appropriate payment for their work. With the support of this grant, Indiana intends to 1) increase professional development opportunities that allow individuals who enter the field to earn a wage while earning workforce certifications or credentials, 2) expand scholarship funding for individuals seeking to enter or advance within the field through training programs that will increase their compensation level and/or professional advancement opportunities during and upon completion, and 3) exploring matching workforce funds or other initiatives to support completive compensation and enhancing working conditions for effective early educators.

Strategy	Planning and Implementation Partners	Expected Outcomes
Support the development and scaling of credential-aligned, job-embedded professional development programs that provide ECCE workers with the opportunity to earn a wage while completing educational and professional development.	OECOSL, IDOE, ELAC, Department of Workforce Development, Indiana Early Childhood Higher Education Forum, Indiana Commission on Higher Education, Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Ivy Tech Community College, Early Learning Indiana	Strengthened pipeline of early career professionals entering into the ECCE field.
Increase scholarship supports for ECCE workers to participate in training and education programs that allow them to earn a wage while completing education/training, advance and increase compensation.	OECOSL, IDOE, Department of Workforce Development, Ivy Tech Community College, INAEYC	Increased participation in workforce training and education programs.
Explore matching workforce funds or other incentives to support recruitment and competitive compensation and working conditions for educators.	OECOSL, IDOE, Department of Workforce Department, local governments and national workforce and subject matter experts.	Increased compensation and benefits for ECCE workers.

ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

Children with disabilities or who have experienced trauma or have behavioral issues face unique challenges with their initial and continued access to high-quality, inclusive ECCE settings. These children often face significant challenges in the classroom, detracting from their learning, straining meaningful relationships and contributing to suspensions and expulsions from early learning programs. Post-pandemic,

states have seen a sharp rise in voluntary and involuntary dismissals and exclusionary discipline practices of young children through grade 2, disproportionately impacting already marginalized populations.

In response, leaders are expanding the use of early screenings and increasing access to training and professional development supports to prepare educators to include, respond to and help children develop the necessary skills to address the behaviors educators are seeing in the classroom. Specifically, states are assessing the current state of inclusive care environments, inventorying available supports and professional development and recommending new and/or updated approaches for preparing ECCE workers. In many cases, this work is closely coordinated with local health systems and statewide mental health networks.

Here in Indiana, the trends noted above are true. During fiscal year 2022, there are more than 27,000 children served through Indiana's early intervention program, First Steps, a high percentage of whom struggle to access quality ECCE services. Additionally, according to the 2022 State of Mental Health in America report published by Mental Health America, Indiana ranks in the bottom half of the United States for child well-being, ranking 26th in the prevalence of mental illness among children and access to mental health services. More than half of all Indiana children with mental health conditions in 2019 and 2020 did not receive treatment. The impact of these statistics is increasingly felt in ECCE classrooms and seen in related technical assistance requests submitted through Indiana's ECCA technical assistance vendor, SPARK Learning Lab.

With the support of this grant, Indiana plans to: 1) complete an assessment of the current state of child and family inclusivity, voluntary and involuntary dismissals and exclusionary practices and related trainings and supports in Indiana's B-5 mixed delivery system, 2) develop a plan for increasing inclusive ECCE settings, 3) build a suite of professional development resources to support behaviors and trauma-informed practices, and 4) revise current inclusion trainings to reflect system focus and current practices. In this work, Indiana will leverage IDOE's Office of Special Education's recent guidelines regarding discipline and exclusionary practices, Head Start's study on the rise of child incidents, and other national bodies of research.

Strategy	Implementation and Planning Partners	Expected Outcomes
Complete an assessment of the current state of voluntary and involuntary dismissals and exclusionary practices in Indiana's B-5 system and assess related professional development available to educators. From this, develop a comprehensive plan for strengthening inclusive care settings across the B-5 system.	OECOSL, IDOE, Office of Preschool Special Education, First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office, CCR&R network, Infancy Onward, SPARK Learning Lab	An ECCE workforce more prepared to support the diverse needs of children, resulting in a more inclusive environment and a correlated decrease in B-5 expulsions and exclusionary practices.
Build a suite of trainings and resources to support behavior and trauma-informed practices to be made available through Indiana's online professional development assistance portal. Develop cohorts for programs to implement practices and supports in ECCE classrooms through Indiana's technical assistance vendor.	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, Office of Preschool Education, First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office, CCR&R network, Infancy Onward	Increased presence and promotion of inclusive ECCE care environments.
Revise current inclusion trainings (e.g., Indiana's current Center Director Inclusion Training) to align with the recommendations in the above strategy and support the development of free educational information and resources available to ECCE program leaders and educators statewide.	OECOSL, IDOE, SPARK Learning Lab, CCR&R network	Increased awareness and support for inclusive care practices among ECCE program leaders.

ECCE WORKFORCE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PEER LEARNING INITIATIVE

Indiana is interested in participating in the ECCE Workforce Technical Assistance and Peer Learning and Community of Practice Initiative. Indiana's participation in this effort has been incorporated into the project budget, and it looks forward to sharing learnings from its workforce efforts with peers across the country.

PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

The table below offers a high-level description of each strategy. Complete strategy details are available in their respective Activity section.

Strategy	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Activity 1: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment			
Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment.	• Finalize approach to updating assessment, including data sources and engagement approaches. (Q1) • Initiate needs assessment refresh and share findings. (Q2) • Complete needs assessment and share findings. (Q3)	• Monitor changes and identify new emerging needs and gaps. (Q1-Q4)	• Develop approach to completing comprehensive needs assessment. (Q1) • Initiate needs assessment. (Q2) • Complete needs assessment and share findings. (Q3)
Activity 2: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan			
Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan.	• Engage stakeholders to review needs assessment findings and begin making recommendations for strategic plan updates. (Q4) • Strategic plan updated and shared with stakeholders. (Q4) • Design system for monitoring progress and outcomes. (Q4)	• Implement a system for monitoring progress and outcomes. (Q1) • Continually assess and share progress and outcomes to ensure system alignment. (Q1 – Q4)	• Refresh plan based on updated needs assessment, grant learnings and changed system environment. (Q4)
Activity 3: Maximize Family Engagement in the B-5 System			
Establish a family policy advisory group to further amplify the voice of families in policymaking.	• Review family policy advisory structures and best practices to inform model creation. (Q1)	Ongoing: • Regularly convene and engage group. • Track and communicate family-informed policy decisions.	

	• Develop proposed approach for Indiana's model. (Q2) • Launch recruitment efforts and plan for first meeting. (Q3) • Institute family policy advisory group along with supporting practices to ensure regular use. (Q4)	• Ensure member participation is continuously representative of Indiana's B-5 family diversity.	
Partner with the Clinton Foundation's Too Small to Fail early learning initiative to launch a "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" campaign.	• Formalize partnership. (Q1) • Develop a strategy for implementing the campaign within the state. (Q2) • Develop campaign assets and secure additional partnership support to enhance/extend campaign reach within local communities. (Q3-Q4) • Complete awareness/engagement audit to develop baseline measure for monitoring campaign performance and establish KPIs. (Q4)	• Launch campaign and monitor results. (Q1) • Adjust engagement efforts based on family engagement levels and performance. (Ongoing)	• Continue monitoring campaign performance and family engagement levels. (Ongoing) • Wrap up campaign. (Q3) • create summary of results. Embed campaign resources and high-performing strategies within B-5 systems. (Q4)
Evaluate structures and processes for determining eligibility for child care subsidies and establish user-centered systems and approaches that improve service and build equity. Promote continuity of care and institute common eligibility with other family support programs (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, TANF).	• Complete a comprehensive mapping of current structures and processes and related best practices in use by other states. (Q1-Q2) • Engage families to provide feedback on the current-state experience and inform future improvements. (Q3) • Develop a roadmap for enhancing current structures and practices. (Q4)	• Share plan with agency leadership and other invested stakeholders to prioritize action. (Q1) • Deploy. (Q2-Q4)	• Continue deploying plan. (Q1-Q3) • Assess impact of implemented efforts. (Q4)

Increase access to B-5 services for Indiana's ESL population by expanding information, education and resources provided in culturally and linguistically appropriate methods.	• Assess current state of access related needs and gaps and examine local and national best practices for addressing. (Q1) • Develop a plan for increasing access to B-5 services through information, education and resources. (Q2) • Build assets and resources. (Q3-Q4)	• Implement the plan and related resources. (Q1-Q2) • Monitor engagement and outcomes. (Ongoing)	• Continue monitoring engagement and performance. (Ongoing) • Develop a summary results and related recommendations for sustaining and building upon high-performing strategies. (Q4)
Develop a statewide plan for increasing the intentionality of child and family transitions from ECCE settings into kindergarten. Establish a cohort of programs to implement recommendations.	• Assess the current state of B-5 transitions and identify related local and national best practices. (Q1-Q2) • Develop plan for increasing the intentionality of transitions across the system. (Q3) • Recruit cohort participants and solidify approach and expectations. (Q4)	• Establish a cohort of ECCE programs to implement recommendations. (Q1) • Provide ongoing coaching to ensure success. (Ongoing)	• Adjust plan based on cohort feedback and results. (Q1-Q2) • Embed recommendations and best practices into system quality structures and field-wide professional development. (Q3-Q4)

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Activity 4: Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices

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Design and implement a strategy to encourage new workforce training models for career entry and advancement.	• Complete a national review of best practices and innovative efforts planned by states. (Q1) • Engage local ECCE and workforce experts to review findings and develop a strategy for encouraging new models in Indiana. (Q2) • Finalize the plan. (Q2-Q3)	• Implement the plan with support from partners. (Q1-Q4) • Monitor and communicate progress and results. (Ongoing) • Share successes and promising practices with	• Monitor and communicate progress and results. (Ongoing) • Share successes and promising practices with national TA and peer learning group. (Ongoing) • Develop a summary of successes and key

		national TA and peer learning group. (Ongoing)	learnings, along with recommendations for scaling high-performing models or investing in new opportunities. (Q4)
Establish a workforce development and innovation fund to build the capacity of local and regional partners to provide credential-aligned programming.	• Complete a review of similar funds inside and outside of ECCE to inform model design. (Q1) • Develop fund. (Q2-3) • Launch fund. (Q4)	• Make grant awards and monitor grantee progress. (Q1/Q2)	• Monitor grantee progress and share successes. (Ongoing) • Develop a summary of successes, learnings and forward-looking recommendations. (Q4)
Strengthen Indiana's ECCE career and technical education (CTE) model.	• Assess the current landscape in Indiana to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities. (Q1) • Complete a parallel national review of promising CTE models inside and outside of ECCE. (Q2) • Develop a plan for strengthening CTE programs, connecting with emerging workforce development models. (Q3) • Share with and recruit pilot school districts. (Q4)	• Prepare to implement pilot. (Q1-Q2) • Launch pilot. (Q3) • Monitor program successes, challenges and results. (Ongoing)	• Monitor program successes, challenges and results. (Ongoing) • Develop a summary of pilot findings and recommendations for expanding the model statewide. (Q4)
Build upon current initiatives to streamline the regulatory process to support improved provider participation and operations.	• ELAC and provider licensing workgroup recommendations expected. (Q1) • Prioritize opportunities to support regulatory enhancements. (Q2) • Begin implementing. (Q3-Q4)	• Continue acting on and implementing changes in support of regulatory enhancements. (Ongoing) • Monitor results. (Ongoing)	

Offer one-time capacity-building grants to ECCE networks and programs to address administrative burdens and operational inefficiencies and redirect focus back to learning.	• Secure partner and design grant opportunity. (Q2) • Launch grant initiative. (Q3) • Award grant funds. (Q4)	• Monitor grant expenditures and related impacts. (Ongoing)	• Develop an impact report to summarize investments made, their related impact and opportunities for further encouraging program efficiencies. (Q4)
Expand the use of Nimble, a shared applicant tracking system offered by IDOE to K-12 school districts statewide, to the ECCE sector to strengthen recruitment.	• Investigate and create a plan for implementing the Nimble platform within the ECCE sector. (Q1-Q2) • Set-up/configure platform to sector needs and requirements. (Q3-Q4) • Develop launch and adoption plan. (Q3) • Launch platform. (Q4)	• Monitor system utilization and ongoing user support needs. (Ongoing) • Deploy ongoing marketing. (Ongoing)	• Promote and drive program utilization. (Ongoing) • Assess impact on sector. (Ongoing)

Activity 5: Support Program Quality Improvement

Build and deploy an assessment system that effectively measures all domains of early learning across the birth-to-five system.	• Determine approach to assessing early learning domains across B-5 age groups. (Q1-Q3) • Identify potential assessment tools. (Q3-Q4)	• Finalize assessment solution. (Q1-Q2) • Deploy. (By end of Q4)	• Evaluate and adjust as needed. (Ongoing)
Update the Paths to QUALITY™ rating system to incorporate objective measures of quality drawn from the assessment system and to reflect current understanding of quality practices.	• Evaluate Indiana's QRIS framework against those of other states to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities. (Q1-Q2) • Create strategy for revising Paths to QUALITY™ to align with specified goals. (Q3) • Engage partners and stakeholders to provide input. (Q4)	• Incorporate objective measures from new assessment model. (Q1-Q2) • Develop strategy for transitioning from Paths to QUALITY™ to the new framework. (Q3)	• Implement new framework. (Fully implemented by Q4) • Monitor ongoing system needs. (Ongoing)

		• Begin implementing early parts of strategy. (Q4)	
Commission a statewide panel review of leading, high-quality ECCE curricula, leveraging recent/ongoing quality and curriculum studies. Identify an approved listing of curricular options for participating Paths to QUALITYTM providers to implement within their program.	• No planned activity in year.	• Review ECCE curricula and create a menu of approved solutions. (Q1-2) • Develop communications and related resource/information supports. (Q3) • Launch menu and supporting grant opportunity. (Q4)	• Deploy grants to providers to assist in purchasing, implementing or strengthening approved solutions. (Q1-Q2) • Assess ongoing support needs and monitor success. (Ongoing)
Offer quality improvement grants to support providers in purchasing and implementing approved instructional curriculum.	• No activity in year.	• Develop grant model. (Q2) • Create supporting assets and resources. (e.g., webpage, application, info on approved solutions, etc.) (Q3) • Launch grant opportunity. (Q4)	• Promote and award grants. (Q1) • Monitor ongoing support needs. (Ongoing)
Commission a curriculum review and pilot study of ECCE programs operating in the catchment areas of school districts identified and prioritized by IDOE for the Science of Reading cadre.	• Identify ECCE programs operating in the catchment areas of priority school districts. (Q1-Q2) • Develop a plan for curriculum review and related pilot. Include incentives for program participation. (Q3-Q4)	• Make outreach to eligible ECCE providers and secure participation. (Q1) • Solidify pilot participation and related supports and requirements. (Q2) • Launch review and pilot study. (Q3-Q4)	• Study and provide ongoing support to programs as needed. (Ongoing) • Monitor and share results. (Q4)

Increase joint planning and professional development opportunities for ECCE, out-of-school time and K-12 elementary school leaders and educators to learn from one another, collaborate and increase coordination.	• Inventory current joint professional development efforts and solicit input regarding needs and priorities. (Q1) • Research promising shared professional development models in place in other states. (Q2) • Develop a plan for increasing joint planning and professional development efforts. (Q3) • Solidify budget and timeline for implementation in 2024. (Q4)	• Deploy joint planning and professional development opportunities. (Q1-Q4) • Seek feedback and make adjustments. (Q3-Q4) • Monitor impact and results. (Ongoing)	• Solicit feedback and monitor results. (Ongoing) • Incorporate changes for future offerings. (Ongoing)
Activity 6: Subgrants to Enhance Quality and Expand Access			
Make available capacity-building grants to new and/or existing providers to expand high-quality seat capacity in targeted geographies.	• Finalize grant opportunity. (Q1) • Deploy grant opportunity. (Q2) Award grants. (Q3)	• Monitor grantee compliance and progress. (Ongoing)	• Monitor capacity improvements and program compliance with grant requirements. (Ongoing)
Offer quality improvement grants to support providers in purchasing and implementing approved instructional curriculum.	• Develop grant program model.	• Develop grant model. (Q2) • Create supporting assets and resources. (e.g., webpage, application, info on approved solutions, etc.) (Q3) • Launch grant opportunity. (Q4)	• Promote and award grants. (Q1) • Monitor ongoing support needs. (Ongoing)
Bonus Area: Coordinated Application, Eligibility & Enrollment for Families			
Complete a landscape analysis of states with combined eligibility systems and practices. Use findings from landscape analysis to	• Map current-state processes and complete landscape analysis. (Q1-Q2) • Discuss and align around findings. (Q3)	• Discuss proposed plan with key stakeholders. (Q1) • Establish system transition strategy. (Q2-Q3)	• Continue implementing strategy. (Q1-Q4)

discuss and create a plan for a unified one-door eligibility process for Medicaid, CCDF and TANF.	• Create a plan for a unified one-door eligibility process. (Q4)	• Begin implementing. (Q4)	

Bonus Area: Improving Workforce Compensation

Support the development and scaling of credential-aligned, work-based training programs that provide ECCE workers with the opportunity to earn a wage while completing educational and professional development.	• Complete a review of similar funds inside and outside of ECCE to inform model design. (Q1) • Develop fund. (Q2) • Launch fund. (Q3-Q4)	• Make grant awards. (Q1) • Monitor grantee progress. (Ongoing)	• Open second round of applications. (Q1) • Make grant awards. (Q2) • Develop a summary of successes, learnings and recommendations for sustaining the fund and/or related grantee efforts. (Q4)
Increase scholarship supports for ECCE workers to participate in training and education programs that allow them to advance and increase compensation.	• Evaluate existing scholarship opportunities. (Q1) • Create a plan for increasing support for individuals participating in training and education programs. (Q2) • Develop a plan for promoting opportunities to providers and workers. (Q3) • Begin implementing plan. (Q4)	• Expend funds in accordance with plan. (Ongoing) • Continue promotion and marketing as needed. (Ongoing)	• Monitor results. (Ongoing)

Bonus Area: Access to Inclusive Settings

Develop and implement a plan for increasing access to inclusive care settings in Indiana.	• Complete an assessment of current voluntary and involuntary dismissals and exclusionary practices in Indiana's B-5 system and assess	• Deploy the plan with the support of partners. (Q1-Q4)	• Monitor results and adjust as needed. (Ongoing)

	• related professional development supports. (Q1-Q2) • Develop a plan for addressing the needs, gaps and opportunities identified in the plan. (Q3) • Create supporting implementation plan. (Q4)		
Build a suite of trainings and resources to support behavior and trauma-informed practices and establish cohorts for programs to implement.	• Identify currently available trainings and perceived needs and gaps. (Q1-Q2) • Develop plan for boosting available training and support resources. (Q3) • Build assets and resources. (Q4)	• Continuing building assets/resources and launch as ready. (Q1-Q2) • Embed training resources in statewide systems. (e.g., provider professional training portal) (Ongoing) • Establish program cohorts to implement practices. (Q3)	• Continuously promote the availability of resources. (Ongoing) • Refine trainings and resources based on cohort feedback. (Q4)
Revise current inclusion trainings to align with the recommendations in the above strategy and support the development of free educational information and resources for ECCE programs.	• Review current trainings against the context of assessment findings and newly created plan. (Q2-Q3) • Develop a plan for revising existing trainings. (Q3-Q4)	• Deploy the plan. (Q1) • Monitor and gather feedback. (Ongoing)	• Evaluate trainings and update as needed. (Ongoing)

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, MEANINGFUL GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
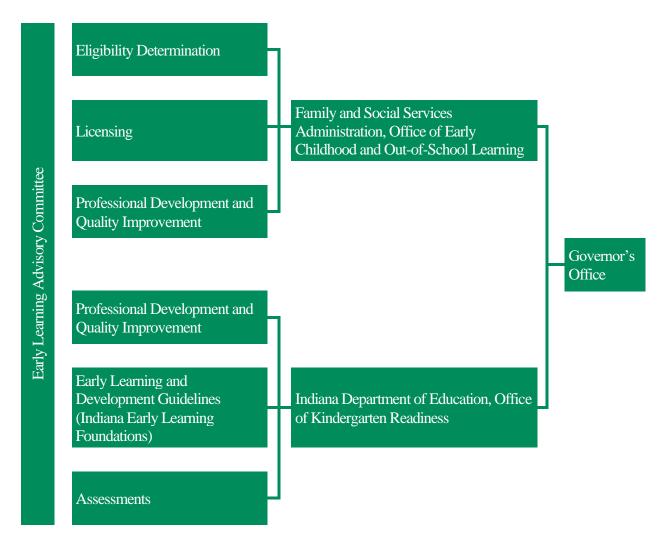
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Indiana's early childhood education sector is governed through a collaboration of two state agencies: the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), acting through its Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL), and the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), acting through its Office of Kindergarten Readiness. The work of these agencies is informed by an advisory council comprised of community stakeholders appointed by the governor and legislative leaders. Other governmental entities contributing to the oversight and success of the sector include First Steps, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Office of Special Education, Office of Assessment and educator credentialing programs.

Over the last several years, Indiana has taken several important steps to strengthen early learning governance in order to address the priorities raised by Indiana's 2019 Birth-to-5 (B-5) Strategic Plan and to respond to the challenges and opportunities illuminated by pandemic response efforts:

- In 2020, Indiana named its first appointed secretary of education. Prior to this appointment, the Indiana Department of Education was led by a separately elected official, which could sometimes slow progress in cross-agency collaboration. The consolidation of governance through the governor has facilitated closer integration between agencies, allowing each to address those components of early childhood education administration most closely aligned to its organizational strengths.

- In early 2022, Governor Holcomb announced the creation of the Office of Kindergarten Readiness within IDOE. The office supports the state's priorities of strengthening early learning opportunities and ensuring children arrive ready for kindergarten, as identified in Indiana's initial grant application: Support Strong Transitions to School and Kindergarten Readiness. Among other responsibilities, this office is tasked with addressing the related goals set forth in the Strategic Plan, including improving

communication during the transition to school and monitoring kindergarten readiness levels across the state. A new director of kindergarten readiness was hired in August 2022 and is engaged in this work.

- Additionally, the Indiana General Assembly adopted legislation strengthening Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) by clarifying its mission and reconstituting its membership as described below. The work of ELAC was further solidified through the hiring of a full-time Early Learning Advisory Committee director, fully dedicated to assisting the committee with accomplishing its goals. The reconstituted ELAC convened for the first time in August 2022 and will make initial recommendations to Governor Holcomb and Indiana's Legislative Council in November 2022.

Decision-Making: The two collaborating agencies, the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning and the Office of Kindergarten Readiness, each have primary decision-making responsibility for certain functions as depicted on the map below. Each agency has representation in ELAC, which serves in a consultative role to both agencies, facilitating joint recommendations for statewide efforts and advising each agency with respect to the work happening within its core function. As shown below, the agencies share responsibility for cross-functional decisions about professional development and quality improvement efforts, as these bodies of work draw from both agencies' expertise. Ultimately, any decisions are validated through or redirected by the Office of the Governor.

Eligibility Determination		
Licensing	Family and Social Services Administration, Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning	
Professional Development and Quality Improvement		Governor's Office
Professional Development and Quality Improvement		
Early Learning and Development Guidelines (Indiana Early Learning Foundations)	Indiana Department of Education, Office of Kindergarten Readiness	
Assessments		

(Left vertical label: Early Learning Advisory Committee)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Organization	Stakeholder Office (if applicable)	Names of Individuals	Role/Area of Expertise
Family Social Services Administration	Office of Early Childhood & Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL)	Courtney Penn, Rene Withers	CCDF Lead Agency
	Office of the Secretary	Dan Rusyniak	FSSA Secretary
	Department of Mental Health & Addictions (DHMA)	Jay Chaudhary	Trauma-informed care and mental health consultation
	The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services – First Steps (DDRS)	Kelly Mitchell, Christina Commons	First Steps administration

	Head Start Collaboration Office (OECOSL)	Tonia Carriger	Head Start
	Office of Medicaid Policy & Planning (OMPP)	Allison Taylor	CHIP
	Department of Family Resources (DFR)	Adrienne Shields	SNAP & TANF
Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)	Office of Kindergarten Readiness	Kelli Servizzi,	Co-leading grant application
	Office of the Secretary	Katie Jenner	Secretary of Education
	Office of Academics	Charity Flores	Chief Academic Officer
	Office of Kindergarten Readiness	Sarah Parks-Reese	Assistant Director of Kindergarten Readiness
	Office of Special Education	Nancy Holsapple	Director of Special Education
	Office of Assessments	Lynn Schemel	Director of Assessment
	Office of Assessments	Felicia Jordan	Assessment Specialist
State of Indiana	Indiana Office of the Governor	Matt Butler, Cora Steinmetz	Governor's legislative priorities and budget items
	Department of Child Services (DCS)	Hannah Robinson	Child welfare, Help Me Grow
	Indiana Department of Health (IDOH)	Kristi Linson, Eden Bezy, Laura Chavez, Ashli Smiley, Lindsey Bouza	MIECHV home visiting programs, NFP, WIC, Help Me Grow
	Governor's Workforce Cabinet (GWC)	Tony Harl, Liz Walker	Apprenticeships/Career & Technical Education, Workforce needs
Community Partners-Agencies/Groups	Early Learning Indiana (ELI)	Maureen Weber	Increasing capacity, promoting quality, and support for Paths to QUALITY™ advancement
	Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)	Maureen Weber, Courtney Hott	Indiana's Early Learning Childhood Advisory Council

Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (INAEYC)	Dianna Wallace	Supports ECCE workforce development and professional development
SPARK Learning Lab	Mike Bachman Kim Hodge	Technical Assistance and Professional Development
Indiana Afterschool Network (IAN)	Lakshmi Hasanadka	Advance opportunities for learning beyond school day
Child Care Resource and Referral Network	Multiple agencies	Family care-finding and community capacity building

Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee: As noted above, in 2022, Indiana adopted legislation detailing the duties assigned to ELAC. In addition to general responsibilities for monitoring the environment and ensuring collaboration among state agencies, the legislature specifically charged ELAC with addressing a number of the priorities raised by the Strategic Plan, including: 1) Establishing child development and educational goals, including the development of standards and objectives for early education programs that receive state or federal funds; 2) Designing an approach to measure progress towards goals, including academic quality; 3) Assessing the attainment of goals and evaluating the efficacy of state and federal spending; 4) Assessing whether licensing requirements are equitable, reinforce established goals and support system sustainability; and 5) Designing workforce strategies and assessing their effectiveness.

ELAC identified four priority areas for policy development including expanding access to high-quality early childhood education that creates readiness for kindergarten, increasing the supply and sustainability of and access to high-quality education providers, increasing affordability and expanding access for families, particularly for marginalized populations, and improving and increasing ECCE system capacity. These four priorities have formed the foundation of this grant. ELAC is now determining specific goals and action items for each of these priorities and will monitor progress against these goals across state government.

Incorporating Family and Provider Voice in Policy Decision-Making: By the terms of its organizing statute, the newly constituted ELAC is required to include representation from a Head Start program, an early learning provider and a school corporation, among other community stakeholders such as business leaders and representatives of community-based organizations. In appointing members, the governor and legislators have placed additional emphasis on provider voice, including a family child care home provider, a representative of a large center-based network and a recently retired leader of a community-based early learning provider. The chair of ELAC operates a network of centers and administers an Early Head Start program.

In addition to ELAC, OECOSL leverages Provider Licensing Advisory Committees (organized by centers, homes and ministries) and five Regional Advisory Councils to provide input into Indiana's technical assistance services and quality rating system. Providers' input has been incorporated into recent changes to Indiana's quality rating and improvement system. For example, feedback has been used to inform various initiatives, such as the creation of Indiana's mental health and wellness program. Feedback has and will continue to inform the development of OECOSL's new operating and data management system.

To capture family voice, OECOSL recently conducted a family needs assessment to inform its understanding of the supports required by underserved families. Details of these findings are noted in several places throughout this application. Indiana will use the resulting information to drive policy and system changes. OECOSL plans to form a family policy advisory group to further amplify the voice of families in policymaking. ELAC will regularly receive summaries from this family-facing group and incorporate their feedback into its annual recommendations.

MONITORING, DATA USE, EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Indiana has intentionally shifted away from largely programmatic efforts (the approach used in the initial grant year), opting instead to invest in system-level strategies that help strengthen and grow the ECCE landscape for the future. While the programmatic investments supported by the previous grant helped the state better understand system issues and pilot strategies for addressing them, many of the investments could not

be sustained – or not at least at the same level. Today, Indiana is in a very different place, with clearly identified plans and existing funds set aside to support their implementation. Thus, Indiana sees the renewal grant as an opportunity to accelerate those plans and build the state's capacity to act on system-level strategies. Together with more than $600M in remaining federal relief funds and existing state funds, these funds can work to seed the change needed in the system and sustain it in the long term.

Additionally, recently strengthened governance, coordination and accountability structures have increased efficiencies. Heightened role clarity has empowered agencies and their partners to streamline planning and work processes to dive deeper into their relative areas of expertise. Agencies also are making a point to coordinate and involve inter-agency and community partners in planning and implementation efforts, as evidenced by the range of stakeholders cited in this application.

Indiana uses a mix of methods to promote accountability across the mixed delivery system. These include regulatory compliance, quality reporting, auditing processes, data sharing, finance and impact reporting and more. Indiana intends to build on these, especially in light of recent changes in system governance and the new collaboration between OECOSL and IDOE. This collaboration, paired with invested partners and clear decision-making channels, will increase accountability processes and further strengthen Indiana's ability to execute the grant activities and expected outcomes outlined in this grant proposal. Indiana will continuously monitor progress with its partners, adapting and evolving its plans as it finds success or hits barriers.

As noted in various sections of this grant, while greater alignment among stakeholders is occurring, work remains to bring together internal data systems and practices. Prompted by the 2019 needs assessment findings, Indiana has begun to make progress on these opportunities and is actively planning to roll out a data system refresh in Q1 2024. In this effort, Indiana is working to create unique child identifiers and APIs to enable stronger data connections, with some of this work proposed to be furthered through PDG support. As

part of its renewal grant proposal, Indiana has requested funds to create additional systems and processes that allow for standard eligibility practices across support programs and more user-friendly processes for families.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PLAN

Implementing a Collective Impact (CI) approach requires a strong program performance evaluation plan that can continually inform stakeholders and decision-makers of Indiana's progress. Notably, the plan should also be able to change and adapt over time.

To plan and implement PDG B-5 Renewal Grant performance evaluation plan, OECOSL will again contract Indiana University's Early Childhood Center (IU). IU is an ideal partner as it currently works with Indiana's early intervention programs to evaluate their implementation and impact and supports continuous quality improvement efforts. The goals of the performance evaluation plan are to:

★★☆ Assess the quality of the collaborative efforts in creating impact.

Monitor progress in implementing grant activities and the extent they bring about the intended outputs and outcomes as outlined in the logic model.

Analyze current and missing data systems and data elements needed to create a shared measurement system for evaluating future quality improvement efforts.

Support continuous quality improvement by providing actionable data reports.

Support informed decision-making among Indiana's B-5 state partners, local programs and communities in aligning program efforts and evaluation with Indiana's vision.

In executing this work, IU will:

1. Lead an evaluation team that includes project staff and state stakeholders to ensure the evaluation plan is responsive and aligned with Indiana's vision and logic model;

2. Design and implement an online project management system for tracking progress in implementing a collective impact approach and carrying out required activities;

3. Design a real-time collaborative measurement system for tracking key performance indicators (e.g., target children, services and service capacity, progress toward meeting goals);

4. Establish an ongoing program monitoring a continuous quality improvement process for local programs and communities to use and adopt best practices; and

5. Conduct ongoing analyses and reporting of all program implementation efforts, including quality, fidelity and cost metrics, for continuous data-informed decision-making.

METRICS

Given the developmental nature of this proposed project, the evaluation team will identify measurable indicators from the proposed logic model (e.g., services matrix, number of best practices identified) and add essential performance metrics for evaluating and reporting on the fidelity, quality and cost of program implementation. Process metrics will be determined that evaluate the extent to which partners: 1) implement a common agenda, 2) align policy and procedural changes with the shared vision, 3) promulgate shared best practices, and 4) contribute to a shared measurement system. Process metrics for evaluating improvement activities will examine how well the PDG initiatives: 1) address the needs of rural providers and providers working with culturally diverse families, 2) implement effective adult learning practices, 3) support local communities in fostering a high-quality early childhood system, and 4) provide a system of supports that is sustainable and tackles the needs of underserved families. Cost metrics will be included and focus on assessing current operating costs, resource contributions and administrative infrastructures of Indiana's B-5 programs. This baseline information will help determine if Indiana is streamlining duplicative infrastructures and increasing program operating and cost efficiencies. Finally, program implementation reporting metrics will be established to examine and report on how effectively local communities and programs: 1) collaborate to inform families of available services in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner, 2) carry out successful transitions across ECCE programs and into elementary schools, 3) participate in TA opportunities to improve program quality and the adoption of evidence-based practices, and 4) implement evidence-based

practices with fidelity. Process, cost and quality implementation metrics will be adopted and adapted from key stakeholders with a history of ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.

Existing data infrastructure, systems and data elements: A key element of a collective impact approach is a measurement system built upon a shared agreement of what constitutes success among all B-5 stakeholders. Once there is agreement on the successful outcomes of Indiana's mixed delivery system, the evaluation team will work in collaboration with project managers to develop measurable indicators and proposed metrics for program evaluation and reporting. It will examine the existing data infrastructure, systems and data elements collected during the needs assessment phase to determine its relevance to, and alignment with, the proposed metrics, its accessibility across the ECCE mixed delivery system and how well it can support implementation reporting and continuous quality improvement efforts. Indiana will use these findings to continuously enhance data systems, including the system updates already underway.

New Data Sources and Data Systems: A companion piece to the evaluation activities will determine gaps in the current evaluation systems and the need to supplement them with either new data sources or interfaces that support information sharing. The evaluation team will use this gap analysis to supplement the data roadmap and propose solutions to Indiana's program implementation reporting and continuous quality improvement needs, including costs. Upon completion, a revised shared measurement system will be proposed that outlines where new data elements are needed, can be integrated into existing data sources and where new data sources could be added to close needed gaps. The shared measurement system will include tools and protocols for accessing, compiling, analyzing and sharing the data across these multiple systems. These tools and protocols will consist of program implementation report functions supporting continuous quality improvement and informed decision-making at state and local levels.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Indiana will build on the ongoing efforts of B-5 partners to inform continuous learning and improvement and provide a potential model for Indiana's ECCE mixed delivery system. Many ECCE systems have a long

history of program improvement and results-based accountability efforts focusing on community building and family needs and promoting evidence-based interventions. Their efforts, along with the continuous learning and quality improvement work of Head Start, will inform PDG's methodological approach.

Operationalizing goals and best practices into discrete, measurable activities, including clear metrics (fidelity, quality, cost) and benchmarks for measuring progress. The evaluation team will work with Indiana's B-5 stakeholders to develop metrics that define thresholds and benchmarks for determining success in program implementation efforts (e.g., programs correctly implement at least 80% of the discrete transition practices, all B-5 programs refer families who need developmental screening, child care or health services).

Establishing clear measurement and sampling protocols for assessing program implementation of the measurable indicators, including program (or community) self-assessment checklists, observational tools, and family, practitioner and community partner surveys. These protocols will enable Indiana to collect information on current practices from multiple participants and perspectives. Assessment data on the measurable indicators will be compiled with existing state data to provide local programs and communities with a profile report that functions as a baseline formative assessment for planning and progress recording.

Establishing and implementing onsite continuous quality improvement (CQI) that targets Indiana's most marginalized populations and geographic areas. This CQI process will involve: 1) establishing a community or program implementation team responsible for providing leadership and organizational supports for enabling adoption of best practices that builds upon the local leadership cadres, 2) compiling existing state and local data, including implementation of the measurement of previously discussed protocols, to assess the need for improvement and current practices, 3) developing an action plan for program improvement that includes discrete goals targeting best practices to improve organizational and technical assistance supports, and a plan and timeline for implementing improvements and monitoring progress, and 4) implementing and

evaluating the action plan using continuous quality improvement cycles (Plan, Do, Study, Act) to support positive incremental change.

Aligning, supporting and evaluating Indiana's ECCE technical assistance resources to support program CQI and conduct local evaluations of best practices implementation and impact. The collective training and technical assistance resources in Indiana's current ECCE mixed delivery system will provide the facilitation needed for targeted local implementation teams to carry out the ongoing CQI steps. Working with the IU evaluation team, Indiana's TA providers will be responsible for gathering local assessment data, recording the local CQI efforts and compiling/analyzing this information. This analysis will provide progress and best practice implementation data for local implementation teams and state and local partners.

INCORPORATING FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopting a collective impact approach requires Indiana's evaluation plan to be developmental and responsive to accommodate new information and evolving decisions. The needs assessment information and Indiana's strategic plan will refine and finalize the target population and geographic areas for quality improvement efforts. Information and decisions concerning existing and needed data systems and elements will guide the development of Indiana's shared measurement system in assembling a connected, interdependent data system that all B-5 partners can use to assess programs, identify needs and inform decision-making. It will determine the scope and quality of evaluation questions Indiana can answer and will lead to further refinement of the proposed logic model.

It is likely that the needs assessment/strategic planning process will uncover possible obstacles in the design and implementation of the proposed performance evaluation plan. For example, an independent review of Indiana's early childhood system through the Help Me Grow Program found that while Indiana has robust and meaningful data, it is not consistently or systematically used to help with strategic planning or identify gaps between needs and resources. Nor is data shared in meaningful and strategic ways across partners. This obstacle will be addressed as part of Indiana's effort to create a common or shared measurement

system. Another anticipated obstacle is the implementation of CQI efforts among local early childhood programs that have never participated in a process that relies heavily on program evaluation and data-informed decision-making. Based on the success of Indiana's health and IDEA program partners, the lessons learned from those efforts will be used to examine how best to implement CQI and introduce the use of data and ongoing program evaluation. This guidance will be used to train and support technical assistance providers and local entities in how best to facilitate ongoing CQI.

LOGIC MODEL

The following logic model presents Indiana's conceptual framework for explaining the project around five major overarching system building goals. These goals and accompanying objectives are linked to the program activities described in this proposal.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short/Medium-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Lead agency priorities Funding and policy objectives Planning partner perspective and input Inter-agency data sets Various research studies	**Activity 1:** Update Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment **Activity 2:** Update Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan **Activity 3:** Maximize Family Engagement **Activity 4:** Support the Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices **Activity 5:** Support	**Activity 1:** Updated B-5 Needs Assessment. **Activity 2:** Refreshed B-5 Strategic Plan. **Activity 3:** Established policy advocacy group; Launched "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" campaign; Enhanced, family-focused eligibility determination processes; Increased access to B-5 services for ESL family populations; Established, intentional practices for supporting children and families in the transition from ECCE settings into school. **Activity 4:** Expanded workforce training models; Launched workforce development and innovation fund; Improved ECCE career and technical education (CTE) model; Streamlined regulatory environment; Awarded capacity-building grants available to programs; Implemented shared applicant tracking system for the sector. **Activity 5:** Deployed assessment system; Updated quality rating and improvement system; Awarded grants to fund curriculum improvement; Completed ECCE Science	**Activity 1:** Deepened stakeholder understanding of system needs and priorities. **Activity 2:** Clear and shared plan for addressing improving the ECCE system. **Activity 3:** Increased number of policy and implementation decisions made based on family input; Improved family awareness of the critical role they play in their child's development; Increased engagement by families in activities to help support early language and learning skills, Reduced barriers in accessing B-5 system services; Improved system service experiences for underserved family populations; Strengthened child and family readiness for the transition to kindergarten. **Activity 4:** Strengthened entry points and career pathways for the ECCE workforce; Increased number of workers attracted to and prepared for the ECCE field; Strengthened regulatory environment to support new and existing ECCE providers; Increased program time spent on instruction versus operational inefficiencies; Streamlined recruitment processes and deepened candidate pools. **Activity 5:** More comprehensive understanding of children's readiness for kindergarten; Strengthened program quality and improved child and family outcomes; Improved instructional practices in ECCE	Improved program quality across the B-5 mixed delivery system to support increased learning and readiness outcomes. Increased access to high-quality care in underserved areas of Indiana. Improved navigation, access and delivery of critical

60

| National landscape reviews

Partner and stakeholder discussions

Family insights

Provider feedback

Partner reports and data sources | Quality Improvement

Activity 6: Enhance Quality and Expand Access to ECCE Programs

Bonus Activity: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment for Families

Bonus Activity: Improved Workforce Compensation

Bonus Activity: Increased Access to Inclusive Settings | of Reading pilot; Increased joint planning and professional development opportunities for ECCE, out-of-school time and K-12 leaders and educators.
Activity 6: Awarded grants to support growths in ECCE supply; Awarded quality improvement grants.
Bonus Activity 1: Completed landscape analysis and plan for implementation of a one-door eligibility process.
Bonus Activity 2: New job-embedded professional development programs made available to providers; New scholarship supports made available to ECCE workers.
Bonus Activity 3: Completed analysis and resulting plan for strengthening inclusive care settings across the B-5 system; New trainings and resources to support behavior and trauma-informed practices; Revised inclusion trainings (e.g., Indiana's current Center Director Inclusion Training). | programs; Strengthened child learning outcomes resulting from increased use of high-quality curriculum; Improved early literacy skill development for kindergarten; Increased alignment in instructional practices across B-5/ECCE systems.
Activity 6: Increased access to high-quality ECCE services in targeted unserved areas of Indiana; Strengthened child learning outcomes resulting from increased use of approved curriculum.
Bonus Activity 1: Clear plan for and progress toward a unified one-door eligibility process.
Bonus Activity 2: Increased participation in ECCE workforce training and education programs that facilitate workers earning a wage or advancing in compensation. Advancements in compensation increases and improved working conditions for high-quality ECCE educators.
Bonus Activity 3: Increased preparedness to support the diverse needs of children, resulting in a more inclusive environment and a correlated decrease in B-5 expulsions and exclusionary practices; Increased presence and promotion of inclusive ECCE care environments. | support services.

Increased workforce quality and sustainability.

Expanded access for children and families to inclusive care settings. |

Indiana's proposed logic model will be a work in progress, reflecting its developmental and continuous quality improvement nature. The needs assessment and strategic planning activities will yield critical findings for refining targets for change and improvement (e.g., target population, determining needed changes to policies and procedures). The performance evaluation plan will ensure program activities are carried out with fidelity, achieve expected program outcomes (e.g., accurate and complete matrix of programs and services), are culturally and linguistically responsive to Indiana's diverse population, and address the needs of Indiana's most underserved children and families. The proposed online tracking system and evaluation metrics will capture any problems with potential barriers or obstacles in a timely fashion and help project staff implement needed changes. The needs assessment and ongoing evaluation efforts will determine if specific quality improvement efforts are feasible and achievable and guide the efforts of Indiana's B-5 stakeholders' efforts to refine the proposed logic model (e.g., considering the strengths and limitations of current data systems).

OVERSIGHT OF FEDERAL AWARD FUNDS AND ACTIVITIES

FSSA provides policy oversight and fiscal management for publicly funded programs serving the people of Indiana. Each year, FSSA and its divisions are responsible for the administration and oversight of billions of dollars in federal funds. The organization has a long-standing history of managing multiple federal projects and adhering to all the applicable and programmatic regulations.

The Director of OECOSL at FSSA will oversee the administration of these grant funds, working closely with the Director of the Office of Kindergarten Readiness at IDOE and with the support of a robust fiscal management team, including a chief financial officer and program controller. OECOSL works within a well-defined contract management system and financial reporting system to ensure that program activities, staff and partners function within the bounds of the programmatic requirements and state and federal laws.

FSSA is a recipient of federal financial assistance, and as such, is required to maintain internal control over federal programs to provide reasonable assurance that each federal program is managed in compliance

with laws, regulations and the provisions of contracts or program agreements that could have a material effect on the federal programs. State agencies receiving federal financial assistance must identify all federal awards received and expended by program within Indiana's financial accounting system.

To more easily facilitate accounting for federal funds and the retrieval of required reports and information, all federal financial assistance received and expended by state agencies is accounted for in the PeopleSoft financial system. The statewide accounting system has been designed to account for federal assistance to apply percentages of federal, state and local funds to each disbursement as entered in the system. Reports, including federal quarterly reports and most information for the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (SEFA), can be produced with minimum time and effort.

Each division of FSSA has a controller and a federal funding specialist, in addition to grant program staff, who monitor budgets and federal expenditures. The federal funding specialist is responsible for collecting documentation regarding expenditures for federal grants and preparing federal financial reports in compliance with federal reporting requirements. OECOSL will establish monthly status meetings with our partners to review expenditures, budgets and program outcomes.

The ELAC director for OECOSL will oversee a Project Director (contracted position), who will manage all grant activities, staff and partners. The position will focus on planning, implementing, documenting and evaluating for sustainability while working with stakeholders and partners to conduct the statewide needs assessment, develop the strategic plan and then oversee the plan's implementation for Indiana's ECCE network. Additionally, the Project Director also will provide support for Indiana's involvement in the national ECCE Workforce TA and Peer Learning Initiative and Community of Practice Participation.

PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

All protected personally identifiable information and other information considered sensitive, consistent with federal, state, local and tribal laws regarding privacy and confidentiality obligations, will be collected on approved state forms and stored in highly secure databases, which are systems controlled by Indiana.

Access to and usage of FSSA and/or State Information Systems is controlled through role-based access privileges. It follows the principle of least privilege, meaning users are granted access to/use of only the minimum amount of information and system functions necessary to perform their role or job assignment.

All employees of Indiana, including contractors who will be granted access to FSSA and/or State Information Systems, undertake and certify completion of state-mandated privacy and security training following a schedule reasonably required by FSSA and Indiana and agree in writing or through electronic confirmation to the rules of behavior regarding access to and use of FSSA and/or State Information Systems.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

As described in Activities 1 and 2, Indiana intends to position this new grant opportunity as building on the work started by the former PDG grant, deepening its understanding of the system and advancing strategies for improving system equity, access and quality. Indiana's approach to this grant opportunity, however, is to avoid programmatic investments and embed change at the system level. While Indiana's prior PDG grant helped deepen the state's understanding of the B-5 system and pilot promising practices, Indiana struggled to scale or maintain these efforts post the grant period. Many of these initiatives, like other grants, were programmatic versus structural ones that Indiana could support over time. Shifting this toward system change ensures improvements made can be sustainable and carried forward. In many cases, the strategies outlined in this proposal represent foundational changes for the system, such as credentialing frameworks, technology systems, workforce development models, etc., or in investing in the capacity of individuals, providers and organizations to drive forward innovative, sustainable change that benefits the B-5 ecosystem.

Funding from this grant and other one-time or short-term federal sources will be used to support Indiana in planning for and seeding system change. Following this, ongoing federal and state funding sources, as well as partner funding, will be used to further scale and sustain the structural changes created. As part of these efforts, Indiana will continue to involve system stakeholders and funding partners in the identification, planning, scaling and sustaining of planned and promising programs following the grant period.

DISSEMINATION PLAN

Indiana will share regular updates on the progress and outcomes of grant efforts using several mediums, including in partner forums, ELAC convenings, ECCE provider channels and on public-facing webpages. Updates will be provided regularly on various strategies and activities, and formal reports will be made available broadly to encourage invested stakeholders to utilize findings to help inform further system progress. Additionally, as Indiana succeeds in these efforts, it will share promising models with peers for consideration in their states. Through the evaluation plan, Indiana will evaluate the extent to which partners have used the information to adapt their practices to improve services and programs for the B-5 system.