

**Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Birth-Five (B-5) Planning
Project Description
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Frequently Used Minnesota Acronyms:

- Minnesota Department of Education=MDE;
- Minnesota Department of Human Services=DHS;
- The Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force=Task Force;
- Interagency Leadership Team=ILT

Project Summary

Project Title: Minnesota Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Birth-Five (B-5) Planning Grant

Applicant Name: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and Children's Cabinet

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Brief description of the proposed grant project: Minnesota will accelerate mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce efforts by implementing key activities to build towards a well-supported early care and education ecosystem.

Needs to be addressed

Key project activities to address identified needs include:

- Consolidate recent mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce research and recommendations to complete a *Strategic Refresh* addendum (Activities One and Two)
- Coordinate community engagement and evaluation initiatives across state agencies through a shared story banking tool (Activities One, Three, and Five)
- Invest in dedicated accessible communications supports (Activity Two and Three)
- Mixed Delivery Action Labs, a human-centered design approach to accelerate local-level partnerships for a coordinated early care and education system (Activities Two and Four)
- Advance understanding of early childhood compensation through engagement of family child care providers on wage scales and plan for compensation parity (Activity Four)
- Build sustainable solutions and state capacity for action through a year-long fellowship and human-centered design professional development (Activities Three, Four, Five)
- Implement solutions in Activities One and Two to reduce administrative burdens on early care and education programs and implement compensation parity (Activity Five)

Activities were selected based on significant community engagement on both mixed-delivery and the early childhood workforce. All activities support one another and all agencies will be involved in each activity. These project activities will accelerate progress in Minnesota and further drive our *Strategic Refresh*, which guides statewide work toward our mission of creating an equitable system that supports expecting and parenting families with young children.

Population group(s) to be served: Activities are directly focused on early childhood programs and the workforce, including family- and center-based child care, Head Start, school districts, and community-based organizations. Ultimately, the activities pursued in this project are aimed to help Minnesota children and families thrive, regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, home language, and economic status.

Project Description

Expected Outcomes

To date, Minnesota's Preschool Development Grants have focused on making it easier for children and families, particularly the ones furthest from opportunity, to get what they need to thrive. While continuing the momentum of that work in other areas, this opportunity will be used to accelerate mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce efforts to build toward a well-supported early care and education ecosystem. All of this is in the context of continuing to pursue our state vision of focusing on children experiencing racial, geographic, and economic inequities in order for all children in Minnesota to thrive within their families and communities. The state anticipates achieving several outcomes, including:

- Implementing the first critical steps of recommendations from The Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force (referred to from this point forward as Task Force) to accomplish the goal that, “all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families”
- Launching local partnerships implementing mixed-delivery systems that address a wide variety of needs: infants and toddlers, workforce supports, kids with disabilities, etc.
- Building state capacity for continued transformative work through mentorship in human-centered design labs as well as implementing a fellowship opportunity
- Gaining a clear understanding from family child care providers on wage scale perceptions
- Establishing and using a shared community engagement structure across agencies to inform policies, programs, and practice; needs assessments; and evaluation
- Designing and implementing a roadmap to increase operational supports to child care
- Learning the short-term impacts of compensation parity using established wage scales

- Reducing administrative burden for early care and education providers

All activities will be completed while advancing our Guiding Principles of: intersectionality, interagency collaboration, whole family approach, racial equity, geographic responsiveness, trauma-informed, and inclusion and belonging.

Approach

Activity One: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

1. A clear description of the process, along with a detailed plan with milestones and timelines, for updating a current/previous needs assessment.

Minnesota was fortunate to receive a 2019 Preschool Development Planning Grant and published a comprehensive [Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment](#) as well as [Community Needs Assessment Findings for Preschool Development Grant](#) in February 2020. This needs assessment informed a 2020-2022 [Preschool Development Grant Strategic Plan](#) and focused on expecting and parenting families with young children who are experiencing racial, geographic, and economic inequities. It was created in partnership with ten community organizations. Well over 1,000 Minnesotans were engaged in the development of the needs assessment, including all eleven Tribal Nations, all state economic development regions, and native speakers of at least nine languages. Parent voice was prioritized and convenings included attendees representing providers, public health, teachers, child care providers and advocates.

The needs assessment drew heavily from quantitative data sources and was created in partnership with the concurrent Title V needs assessment. Through Minnesota's current PDG B-5 renewal grant, an updated needs assessment combined with a strategic plan, *a Strategic Refresh*, will be published by December 30, 2022 via contractor School Readiness Consulting. The *Strategic Refresh* includes deeper community engagement and updates the state's work to

reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the national racial reckoning in order to identify emerging or previously unidentified needs affecting programs serving the most vulnerable or underserved populations.

The *Strategic Refresh* included a review of current and ongoing initiatives, existing community and program-level data, and partner engagement to better understand the landscape, needs, and opportunities for Minnesota's B-5 system in 2023 and beyond. Specifically, the *Strategic Refresh* process sought to build on existing themes and the biggest challenges facing the early childhood system and the impacts of recent years; create stronger alignment between the 2020-2022 needs assessment and strategic plan; and elevate family and community voice.

This work was completed through targeted engagement, including nine listening sessions with a total of twenty families; seven listening sessions with twenty early childhood providers; four advisory council meetings with families and providers; twelve PhotoVoice participants, each contributing their story; and thirteen interviews with state and local B-5 leaders. The resulting *Strategic Refresh* provides a comprehensive picture of both the needs and the actions needed to meet four priority areas in Minnesota (*note: the report is not yet complete and these priorities may be amended*):

1. Families can access the services they need to help their young children thrive.
2. Available early childhood supports and services meet a high standard of quality.
3. Families and communities play an active role in informing the planning, implementation, and oversight of state and local programming.
4. A sustainable and comprehensive statewide infrastructure to implement a streamlined system is in place.

Through this opportunity, Minnesota will create an addendum to the *Strategic Refresh* to answer critical questions and expand on Priority Area 2 on the quality and availability of early childhood education programs (ECCE), including availability and equitable access for infants and toddlers and children in underserved communities, high-poverty communities, and rural areas. Some of this data is available through the Child Care Access project, a partnership between the state and the University of Minnesota to develop a family-centered measure of access to early care and education that includes factors of availability, geography, quality, and cost. Minnesota is in the process of updating this data and of considering intersections with other data sources, such as the Child Opportunity Index, that can layer in information about barriers to equitable access facing the most vulnerable and underserved communities across the state.

Three additional sources of information about equitable access for families anticipated to be completed in 2023 that will complement and inform proposed PDG B-5 work include:

- a Minnesota Cost of Care Study providing more insight into the costs to run an early care and education program and how that affects the price families pay;
- a Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Environmental Scan to help Minnesota better understand who provides this type of care for families; and
- an Early Care and Education Workforce Study to fill in gaps in understanding of who makes up this critical workforce.

These three data sources will also provide important insights into the needs of early care and education programs as they will generate new information and update information collected in previous studies to reflect current realities, including the impact of COVID-19 on the sustainability of programs.

Minnesota is seeking to understand impacts related specifically to COVID-19 in several ways, including through a [research partnership with Child Trends](#) -which has explored these impacts through a series of briefs- and by undertaking an analysis of data collected through applications for Minnesota's Child Care Stabilization Grants. Insights from these projects about barriers to and supports for programs' capacity and financial sustainability are echoed in a set of qualitative interviews with child care providers completed by the Minnesota PDG B-5 team's Early Care and Education Business Support Specialist in early 2022, and across conversations with providers in a range of community engagement settings.

Another important element of Minnesota's addendum to the *Strategic Refresh* will be insights from continued efforts to identify structural barriers to creating a high-quality, mixed delivery ECCE system. Work is underway to complete additional analysis of [Minnesota's Children's Fiscal Map](#). This analysis will provide a more granular look at Minnesota's spending on early childhood programs and systems, categorizing spending across key functions such as family access and workforce supports. One goal of this analysis is to identify additional opportunities for braiding funding, coordinating service eligibility or enrollment, or otherwise making more efficient use of resources across programs. The consolidation of information across sources will populate the *Strategic Refresh* addendum and guide the rest of the project work.

2. The collaborative process to engage state system partners to conduct the needs assessment, and to collect information related to requirements, including data on workforce needs.

Minnesota has learned throughout PDG B-5 work that there are no existing shared cross-agency community engagement structure and feedback loops that center the needs of children, families, and the child care and early education workforce - especially those farthest from

opportunity. There is no established way across the enterprise to systematically gather diverse community stories for the purpose of improving programs, policies, and practice; targeting in-person engagement; aligning statewide needs assessment such as Child Care Development Block Grant (CCBDG), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), Head Start, and Part B and Part C and Title V; and providing evaluation. This contributes to state engagement being siloed, fragmented, and communities being engaged multiple times with similar or the same line of questioning, frustrating community members and wasting resources.

In order to address gaps in the state's needs assessment process while promoting a sustainable solution, Minnesota will adopt a community storytelling and sensemaking tool, like Kansas Our Tomorrows, that provides a common source of information for state agencies serving children and families. This tool allows community members to tell a story based on a simple prompt and then self-code their own data, taking away the bias of researchers. In addition to the tool, state agencies across the child and family serving system will use existing cross-agency governance structures to support analysis and identification of themes, and use the information to understand and respond to the needs of families and providers across systems, breaking down silos. Conversations are already under way among cross-agency staff members representing CCDBG, CBCAP, Head Start, Part B, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, Title V and the state enterprise's Results Team for co-development of a tool, as well as analytic and dissemination plans. Through this funding opportunity, Minnesota will co-design and pilot the tool with families and the early childhood workforce to answer remaining questions regarding the impact on the early childhood workforce and advancing mixed-delivery partnerships throughout the state including: barriers to access for infants, toddlers, and children

furthest from opportunity; barriers to mixed delivery, including capacity and financial stability; and existing and emerging needs in the early childhood workforce.

Minnesota will use the qualitative data collected through the tool and combine it with data collected through previously mentioned sources as well as: the upcoming Early Care and Education Workforce Study update to be complete December 30, 2023 (previous studies in 2006 and 2011; additional details provided in Activity 4) and a mixed-delivery brief created in partnership with the PDG B-5 TA Center through interviews with eighteen mixed-delivery partnerships statewide (details in Activity Two). The data collection tool will be comprehensive, but focus on data from the early childhood workforce and mixed-delivery models.

Minnesota's PDG B-5 work has a history of co-creation with community members and this proposed work will be no exception. Beyond state-level cross-agency partnerships in using and developing the tool, Minnesota will work with a diverse group of families. There is an existing model of this through the current Indigenous evaluation led by Wilder Research and Bowman Performance Consulting and the co-created development of a story banking tool targeted for American Indian children and families. That co-creation process will be replicated with families with disabilities, multilingual learners, Black, Latine, Asian, immigrant, and other historically marginalized populations.

Data collected through these efforts will inform the *Strategic Refresh* addendum as well as policy, practice, and program decisions by cross-agency state and local partners. Findings will strengthen and enhance information on children and family needs, facilitate enrollment by identifying and reducing barriers families' experience, and identify the needs of providers and workforce capacity in a way that drives action. Initial work will begin in Activity One and operationalize through Activity Three.

Finally, Minnesota has the capability through the state’s Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) to provide unduplicated counts of children for programs that are included within the ECLDS. There are two primary limitations in completing these counts. First, many programs that children and family’s access are not in ECLDS, nor will many – such as family, friend, and neighbor – ever be. Secondly, it will be important to message that the state’s goal is to scaffold as many supports as are needed, and use this data to ensure that eligible children and families are enrolled in programs that would support them. The reverse of the question would be more interesting to explore, “How many eligible children and families are not receiving support or participating in programs?” Minnesota will work to answer, to the extent possible, these questions within the *Strategic Refresh* addendum.

3. Plans to identify needs of the ECCE workforce, including the impacts to the workforce as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the pre-published findings of Minnesota’s *Strategic Refresh*, School Readiness Consulting shared, “Many partners spoke about the strain that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on an already fragile child care industry. A severe child care crisis persists across the state, resulting in an overwhelmed workforce and an inadequate supply of care to meet demand from families. This points to the need for an upstream solution to stabilize the sector and create a viable plan for addressing long standing issues surrounding the child care supply.”

In response to the urgency suggested by this finding, Minnesota will prioritize identifying needs of the ECCE workforce in the development of the addendum to the *Strategic Refresh*. Several sources of information already cited above as providing insight into the needs of families and programs will also provide valuable information about the capacity, health, financial status, and well-being of the ECCE workforce, including the Cost Model Study; Family, Friend, and

Neighbor Environmental Scan; research briefs from Child Trends; analysis of Child Care Stabilization Grant application data; and interviews with child care providers. Additionally, MDE's Early Childhood Workforce Student Worker has been analyzing available administrative data about the ECCE workforce in school-based and Head Start settings (which were not included in previous child care studies), which will provide important insight into those segments of the workforce. The Child Trends research partnership and Child Care Stabilization Grant descriptive analysis mentioned above will provide key information specific to the impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce.

The Early Care and Education Workforce Study that Minnesota is in the process of launching with the current PDG B-5 renewal grant will help fill in identified gaps in current data sources on the workforce, creating a more comprehensive snapshot of existing and emerging workforce needs. The scope of this study includes information on levels of experience and credentials in the workforce; information on wages and benefits; and demographic makeup of the workforce. While this study will not be complete until December 2023, findings from an initial landscape scan of existing data sources, and possibly insights from initial focus groups, will help inform the *Strategic Refresh* addendum.

The Transforming Minnesota's Early Care and Education Workforce group will also help inform the addendum to the *Strategic Refresh*. This group is a public-private partnership that has worked together since 2015 to identify opportunities to improve supports for the ECCE workforce. Membership includes representation from state agency staff, non-profit ECCE organizations, Higher Education Institutions, and other community agencies. The workgroup has been instrumental in advancing financing conversations through [*Early Care and Education: Profile of an Industry in Crisis*](#) and [*Minnesota Early Care and Education Wage Scale*](#), articles

published with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Security (DEED). The group also created a report on implementing the recommendations from *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*.

Another important focus of the group is providing more coherent professional development pathways for early educators. Recent work of some members of the group has focused on developing a proposed approach for implementation of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s Power to the Profession Unifying Framework in higher education programs preparing educators to work in ECCE. Development of this approach required close examination of barriers to higher education access, stacking of experience and credentials, and articulation of credits across institutions. This group's understanding of the barriers and opportunities in this area will be useful information for assessing financing, compensation, and professional development needs for the ECCE workforce.

Another useful source of information for assessing pathway and professional development needs will be Minnesota's participation in the national Child Care Services Association pilot of an Early Care and Education Apprenticeship Model. Minnesota was recently among a handful of states selected to participate in the pilot, which will determine how to implement the nationally-developed apprenticeship model in the Minnesota context. The work to adapt the national model to local needs will provide insights into barriers and opportunities to expand access to experiences, like apprenticeships, that combine on-the-job learning with classroom-based instruction, mentorship, and wage increases.

As demonstrated, Minnesota has several sources of information to answer the targeted questions as a part of Activity One. Compilation of this information will be completed by

existing staff across the departments of Education and Human Services and the Children's Cabinet and result in a *Strategic Refresh* addendum during the first quarter of 2023.

Activity Two: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan

1. A clear description and evidence of how the state plans to update a Strategic Plan with milestones and timeline for complementing the design and beginning the implementation of the strategic plan, in alignment with required activities.

Minnesota will build off the 2022 *Strategic Refresh* to identify gaps in efforts specifically addressing mixed-delivery and the early childhood workforce. In addition to alignment of early childhood workforce efforts listed in Activity One (which will supplement the needs assessment and strategic planning), the *Strategic Refresh* addendum will align to Task Force recommendations. The Task Force was proposed by early care and education advocates, legislators, and the Walz-Flanagan Administration to develop a state plan to accomplish the goal that, "all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families." The Task Force, funded by federal American Recovery Plan dollars, must develop a plan and implementation timeline to achieve the following goals starting in July 2025 and finishing no later than July 2031:

- Creating a system in which family costs for early care and education are affordable;
- Ensuring that a child's access to high-quality early care and education is not determined by the child's race, family income, or zip code; and
- Ensuring that Minnesota's early childhood educators are qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated regardless of setting.

The Task Force’s preliminary findings and draft implementation plans are due to the Governor and legislative committees with jurisdiction over early childhood programs December 15, 2022, with a final report due February 1, 2023. Funds to implement the plans are not yet identified.

PDG B-5 work does not seek to duplicate efforts, but instead amplify the learnings of various early childhood workforce initiatives and the Task Force as a part of an addendum for the state’s *Strategic Refresh*. This work will have both short-term as well as long-term goals, in alignment with the Task Force, that begin implementation in 2025. In order to be successful, the *Strategic Refresh* addendum will include concrete actions that agencies can take to achieve the recommendations and priorities. Existing governance structures that include child and family serving system leaders convened by the Children’s Cabinet will be used to assess progress monthly, continuously look for where adjustments may be needed, and take advantage of opportunities to advance the work through proposed legislation, policy, program, or practice decisions, as possible.

Leaders in the early childhood governance teams led by the Children’s Cabinet include cross-agency staff members representing CCDBG, CBCAP, Head Start, Part B, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, Title V, and more. As such, resources across the state enterprise may be leveraged to reach mutual goals. Minnesota used PDG B-5 in the past to braid funding across state and federal dollars, setting up work for greater sustainability (highlighted in PDG B-5 TA’s [Coordinating Funds to Support the Sustainability of Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems](#), and including both Family Leadership Training and the Community Solutions grant program). This same approach will be used in the *Strategic Refresh* addendum while considering the financial supports at the local, state, and federal levels identified in the Mixed Delivery Action Labs (details in Activity Four and Project Timeline and Milestones).

2. How the strategic plan will comprehensively address the needs of the ECCE workforce.

Minnesota has several efforts to consolidate into one *Strategic Refresh* addendum and to be used to inform state-level action planning. Action planning will take place through Minnesota's existing governance structure. The Task Force has two focused workgroups: the Family and Provider Affordability Working Group and the Workforce Compensation and Supports Working Group. Products from these workgroups include an updated early childhood wage scale as well as recommendations for: incentives to recruit and retain staff, benefits, and to provide on-going funding to programs for compensation. Minnesota will consolidate Task Force recommendations and those from previously created early childhood workforce reports (a Cost Model Study; Family, Friend, and Neighbor Environmental Scan; research briefs from Child Trends; analysis of Child Care Stabilization Grant application data; Early Care and Education Workforce Study; and interviews with child care providers) into the *Strategic Refresh* addendum that addresses the needs of the ECCE workforce. Minnesota values a comprehensive approach that will also ensure Head Start and school-based programs are a core component of the *Strategic Refresh* addendum, including the early child special education workforce. Additional sources of data will include results from a workforce compensation study currently being implemented by the Minnesota Head Start Association as well as data collected by the state's Early Childhood Special Education Team.

The Early Care and Education Workforce Study will address the comprehensive needs of the field. In addition to gathering updated demographic information about the early care and education workforce, it will provide information on providers' needs, participation, barriers, perceptions, and attitudes related to training and professional development opportunities. It will also provide information on financial supports staff have received including: scholarships,

reimbursements for training, loans, and wage supplements. For the first time, the study will take a more expansive approach and include all staff who are involved in the day-to-day care and education of children, including providers, teachers, assistant teachers, aides, directors, and assistant directors of licensed family child care programs; licensed center-based programs; certified centers; Early Head Start and Head Start programs; and staff of school-based early learning programs, including Early Childhood Family Education, Early Childhood Special Education, School Readiness, School Readiness Plus, and Voluntary Pre-K. Given that Minnesota has so many efforts, each serving its own purpose, around the ECCE workforce, the *Strategic Refresh* addendum will be a critical exercise in creating a unified action plan across efforts to address the comprehensive needs of the early childhood workforce.

3. How the strategic plan will expand access to and increase participation of children in high quality ECCE programs and services across the mixed delivery system.

Activity Two will result in an addendum to the *Strategic Refresh*, supplementing data already gathered through the Task Force, New Practice Lab, the PDG B-5 TA Center, and the *Strategic Refresh* on mixed-delivery and expanding access to high quality ECCE participation for all children. Minnesota knows mixed-delivery systems are the future and local level partnerships must be accelerated. To do this, Mixed-Delivery Action Labs will be implemented (Activity Four) and used as a forum to support local level efforts and gain input on how Task Force and other recommendations in the Strategic Refresh may be operationalized locally.

True family choice and engagement hinges on a well-coordinated mixed-delivery system that is tailored to meet the needs of children and families. There are multiple benefits to children, families, programs, and community partners when communities come together to develop a mixed-delivery early childhood education and care system. These benefits have been

substantiated by research and from Minnesota’s experience working with mixed-delivery partnerships. Mixed-delivery must include:

1. Assuring children and families have access to high-quality ECCE experiences.
2. Increasing parent choice by expanding diverse program options offering high-quality ECCE experiences.
3. Providing comprehensive and supportive services including screenings, referrals with other interventions, and transportation.
4. Using existing facilities and resources to build community relationships and program capacity.
5. Building a variety of partnerships known to improve alignment, program quality, and family engagement.
6. Protecting supply and quality of 0-3 early care and education options.

Minnesota lacks a uniformly robust mixed-delivery system and will use this opportunity to continue to build that system. There are several key initiatives and engagement efforts that will inform the addendum to the *Strategic Refresh*. Providing the broadest umbrella is the Family and Provider Affordability Working Group of the Task Force which has been charged with setting the North Star for family and provider access. This includes setting long and short-term goals around use of existing funding (including early learning scholarships, CCAP, and other early childhood funding) and changes to funding to support affordable, high-quality ECCE accessible to all families.

Building on these recommendations and those of the *Strategic Refresh*, the addendum will incorporate learnings from other engagement efforts as well. For instance, Minnesota engaged with New America’s New Practice Lab on a sprint process in 2022 that engaged families,

providers, and state agency staff in better understanding barriers to accessing ECCE opportunities. This work, as well as the *Strategic Refresh* previously described, both had the explicit goal of improving equity across ECCE B-5 systems for children, families, and providers, and increasing participation of infants and toddlers, as well as children with disabilities and the most vulnerable or underserved populations and children in rural areas. Access challenges were reported in the New America work and in the *Strategic Refresh* for families with children with special needs and those living in rural communities, where low population density has kept services sparse and spread over large geographic areas. Broad swaths of families in Minnesota are living where there is a severe lack of child care, and the gap is even more pronounced when it comes to infant and toddler settings, settings that can adequately accommodate children with special needs, settings that meet the needs of English language learners, and settings with the capacity to integrate mental health services. Previous PDG B-5 work focused on transitions into kindergarten, with many lessons learned. For the purposes of the *Strategic Refresh* addendum, Minnesota will document these kindergarten transition recommendations and also expand the focus to include transitions from infant and toddler to preschool through targeted prompts in the story bank and in the mixed-delivery action labs.

In early 2022, Minnesota worked with the PDG B-5 TA Center to more specifically target engagement with local-level mixed delivery partners, interviewing eighteen individuals who represented one of three mixed delivery partners: school districts/charter schools, Head Start grantees, or child care programs. They examined all combinations of partnerships and found several benefits to mixed-delivery partnerships, including: offering families longer hours and more robust services, addressing facilities concerns, family choices on the setting that meets their needs, increased program quality, referrals to partners, cost effectiveness, and enhanced

reputations. Despite this, there are several challenges, as well as opportunities, that Minnesota will document and include within the *Strategic Refresh* addendum, including: misaligned programmatic requirements, interpersonal relationships, financial planning, and logistics. State opportunities for action include: aligning program standards and minimizing differences between programs, aligning funding, providing more funding and greater access to funding, providing additional guidance, and general simplification of processes. The updated Strategic Plan will help the state take advantage of these opportunities.

Finally, an explicit recommendation from the New America Practice Lab work was for MDE to incentivize collaboration, both at the state and local level. This is echoed in preliminary *Strategic Refresh* findings, charging the state to “strengthen the operational capacity of organizations implementing services to ensure a whole-child, whole-family approach to service delivery. The state can invest in organizational capacity and leadership to encourage collaboration and partnerships between programs and systems serving families, allowing communities to better respond and generate holistic solutions to emerging needs for families.” Both the state and local-level can overcome some of the consequences of siloed and complex programs by incentivizing staff across all levels of the system to design solutions together. This is critical learning that will inform the addendum. It will also inform how Minnesota implements the proposed mixed-delivery action labs in order to optimize the state’s ability to both share learnings with and learn from local communities about how strategic efforts to improve access through mixed-delivery work (and do not work) for communities.

4. How other key priorities to strengthen the state B-5 early childhood care and education system will be addressed based on the findings of the needs assessment.

The *Strategic Refresh* addendum will be completed with consideration for the children and families prioritized in Minnesota's work and through an equity lens. Quality improvements, such as meeting the cultural- and linguistic-needs of families, trauma-informed care, and meeting the practical care needs of families, must meet the identified needs of children and families. Families as well as providers have been deeply engaged in the existing documentation to be assessed.

Duration of care and education hours is a concern for families. New Practice Lab finds, “In many parts of the state, families lack care options all together. Some are forced to drive nearly an hour each way for drop-off and pick-up from ECCE programs. There simply aren’t proximate options for many families, more acutely for families seeking care options for non-traditional hours.” “Families are in very high need,” said an early learning advocate. “When they call us, they are in distress; they can't find anything.” The PDG B-5 TA Center stated in its mixed-delivery memo, “When partners combine resources, they can offer families early childhood care and education programs with longer hours and more robust services.”

Early childhood suspension and expulsion is another concern for families, especially for Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian children in classrooms predominantly led by individuals who do not share their race, culture, ethnicity, and values or who do not have an understanding of culturally responsive care and education. Professional development activities described in this narrative promote education on implicit bias and trauma-informed approaches. However, research reviews and community engagement efforts have shown that the reduction of teacher-child ratios is a key driver in reducing suspension and expulsion, as well as investment in efforts like infant and early childhood mental health consultation for staff. Strategic quality improvements will be documented through Activity Two in the *Strategic Refresh* addendum and be put into action in the Activity Four Mixed-Delivery Action Labs.

5. Plans for meaningfully engaging early childhood system partners in the development and implementation of the strategic plan, including families, providers, and those who have been traditionally marginalized.

Minnesota has strong partnerships at the state-level across multiple areas that directly impact early childhood, such as CCDF, Part C, State Advisory Council, Head Start, schools, child care, and Tribal Nations. Strong relationships also exist with state agencies that may be less typical partners, such as the Departments of Employment and Economic Development, Labor and Industry, Information Technology, Management and Budget, Transportation, Natural Resources, and the Attorney General's Office. Wide-ranging partnerships allow Minnesota to create multi-disciplinary solutions that meet a wide variety of needs.

These expansive partnerships will be exercised through implementation of the state's story banking tool. A critical step described in Activity One is the co-development of the tool with families who have been traditionally marginalized. In order for the engagement to be meaningful, part of that co-development must be the process of how the data is used and responded to, including by the wide-range of partners listed above who play a role in working towards supporting children and families in Minnesota to thrive. Community has clearly expressed a need for action based on stories that have been shared. Feedback loops with community to share actions based on identified needs will again occur. This step is critical to ensuring actions are meaningful. Partnering with community-based organizations will also continue to occur as it has proved successful in the past. Information gathered will be combined with previous family engagement as referenced previously.

Another area of great opportunity is strengthening relationships with family child care providers, especially when considering a mixed-delivery model and provider compensation.

Through this proposal, deep engagement with family child care providers, with a particular emphasis on understanding how to implement compensation parity standards in a family child care context, will be completed. Family child care providers have communicated through current engagement channels that existing wage scale frameworks do not fit well into the family child care business model. The targeted engagement sessions proposed would employ human-centered design methods to engage family child care providers in designing an equitable compensation framework that works for them as care providers, business owners, and operators.

Minnesota recognizes there may be barriers and potential roadblocks to coordination among partners. One consideration is overburdening child care providers. As demonstrated through the unprecedented pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, chronic under-staffing and a plethora of initiatives are greatly stretching child care providers. PDG B-5 work will be mindful of this and make every effort to not increase the burden on providers through this engagement. Instead, existing channels and opportunities will be used, including working with family child care providers to learn more about their experience with wage scales. Another consideration is a fast approaching major election cycle where every single elected official is up for re-election after a redistricting. In addition, Minnesota has a generous budget surplus and the 2023 legislative session is a budget session. Change is inevitable and PDG B-5 work must and will be responsive to any changing political, legislative, and budget contexts.

Activity Three: Maximize Parent and Family Engagement in B-5 System

1. A clear description of how the state will address the required activities to maximize parent and family engagement.

Multi-directional communications are critical. A previously mentioned New Practice Lab sprint process in early 2022 interviewed 42 parents of preschool age children as well as 25

community partners including MDE leadership, community-based organizations, school districts' administrators and teachers, leading education advocates, and early care and education representatives from tribal communities. Language served as one of the greatest hurdles for parents. Out of the 42 interviews conducted with parents, 28 spoke a language other than English. Among those parents, more than half shared it was difficult to communicate their needs and obtain information from their local school district about early learning programs and, once they had what they needed, some of the information and language used within the application and/or program brochure was complicated. They again had to turn to others within their community or community-based organization for support.

Clear communications that are tailored to communities through multiple methods, multilingual, accessible, and plain language are a vital component to family engagement and to creating family knowledge sufficient for true family choice. Minnesota has been committed to communications in PDG B-5 work through a 1.0 FTE Early Childhood Communications Lead as well as funding other communication efforts including closed captioning, translations, videos, document creation, and social media and marketing campaigns. To support multi-directional communications and the state ensuring community voice shapes programs, policies and practice, families and providers co-develop resources to ensure they meet community needs. For example, it is best practice to have community review of any translations of documents to ensure it accounts for dialect nuances. The developed story-banking tool will also be used to shape communications while communities provide information to inform the state's efforts.

To continue to address this critical need, this project proposes a 1.0 FTE Communications Lead and dedicated funding to support communications, including closed-captioning, translations, videos, graphic design, interpretation, and community stipends for co-development.

The focus of this work will be communications that are responsive to results of needs assessments as well as what is learned through the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs and the story-banking tool. Without clearly communicating state efforts in ways that are responsive to community need, they are lost and do not improve the real experience of children and families.

2. Clearly articulated plan with strategies and activities to ensure that parents and families are provided timely, accurate information in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner about the variety, quality, access, and affordability of early childhood care and education programs for children from birth through kindergarten entry in the state's mixed delivery system of existing programs and providers.

Responsive community engagement has been and will continue to be a primary focus within PDG B-5 work because it is key to establishing and maintaining state-local relationships and connecting community members with relevant early childhood resources and programs. The online navigator website [Help Me Connect](#) links expectant families, families with young children (birth to eight years old), and those working with families to services in local communities that support healthy child development and family well-being. Help Me Connect both improves the availability of and informs families about early childhood resources in Minnesota. Programs and services highlighted include healthy development and screening, family well-being and mental health, early learning and child care, disability services and resources, and American Indian families. Analytics about common search terms on Help Me Connect help inform what early childhood topics are highlighted on the website. Monthly online presentations are hosted where families and providers can ask about Help Me Connect resources relevant to their needs.

Minnesota's quality rating and improvement system for child care, Parent Aware, offers free tools and resources to help families find child care and early education programs. Parents

can also access licensing records and search for child care based on rating, location, and type of service. Parent Aware star-rated programs are rated using research-based best practices that prepare children for school and life. Currently there are 2,896 child care and early education programs holding a Parent Aware rating. Information about Parent Aware's Racial Equity Action Plan is provided in Activity Five.

Parent Aware is operated and actively promoted by Child Care Aware of Minnesota, a contractor of the Department of Human Services. Parent Aware communication goals include:

- Increasing the number and percent of young children attending a quality child care program, especially low-income children and children of color;
- Increasing the number of early learning programs with a Quality Rating, including programs that serve racially diverse families and children; and
- More partners knowing about Parent Aware and advocating for its mission and resources.

Child Care Aware fulfills these goals using a number of communication strategies, such as printing and distributing parent guides and other materials, statewide hotline, digital advertisements, and building relationships with community partners.

Many steps have been taken to establish equitable methods of communication at the state level. Maintaining an equity lens throughout PDG B-5 communications efforts is a critical aspect of ensuring families and caregivers receive the early childhood information and resources they need. A PDG B-5 Tribal Lead and an Indigenous Evaluator were hired to help improve engagement around early childhood for the American Indian community. Translations of English text and resources into other languages such as Spanish, Hmong, and Somali have provided further accessibility of early childhood resources. Help Me Connect recently was translated into four other languages besides English. Videos created about the early childhood system at the

state, such as the in-progress Mental Health Consultation video and Help Me Connect promotional videos, prioritized making captioning and/or audio available in multiple languages. Additionally, a Trauma-Informed Toolkit was created to help support families and children with a stress and trauma-lens, and an equity audit of documents was done during the PDG B-5 evaluation process to continue to improve communications efforts moving forward.

Minnesota has made great strides to promote family choice and access to high-quality settings, as well as reduce the paperwork burden on families. One effort pursued outside of PDG B-5 is MNBenefits, an integrated benefits application that allows for application to up to nine public benefits programs in under twenty minutes, including: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Emergency Assistance, Housing Support, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Diversionary Work Program, General Assistance, Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP/TANF), Minnesota Supplemental Aid, and Refugee Cash Assistance. PDG B-5 work supported creating a business case for the cross-agency integration of Early Learning Scholarships, Head Start, and SNAP for Women, Infants, and Children into MNBenefits.

PDG B-5 work is advancing categorical eligibility through supporting the direct certification of school meals based on a child's participation in Medicaid. This resulted in 90,000 kids enrolled in school meals, including approximately 16,000 children not yet in kindergarten. This process is currently being replicated with the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and school meals. Access was increased for administrators of Head Start and Early Learning Scholarships to verify a child's participation in SNAP, MFIP, and CCAP, reducing the burden on families. Minnesota intends to continue the momentum of these efforts in the no-cost extension year of the PDG B-5 renewal grant and has begun exploratory conversations with SNAP, WIC, foster care, Head Start, and others. A key part of a mixed-delivery system is a

coordinated intake model for mixed-delivery partnerships. Minnesota has, and will continue to build out, a prototype that will be piloted in the Mixed Delivery Action Labs.

Cross-agency partnerships have created opportunities to ensure both internal and external audiences are well-informed about ECCE programs and projects. Though interrelated, communications efforts for PDG B-5 have largely been separated into two categories: internal and external. Internal efforts include the development of a cross-agency communications plan, which provides a resource database and streamlines communication between state staff surrounding early childhood. Regularly scheduled cross-agency meetings and internal newsletters also create spaces for people in different sectors of early childhood at the state to become more aware of the work that is taking place around them. This knowledge supports better informed ECCE policy and program decisions.

External communications efforts are strengthened when cross-agency connections are used to get the word out about early childhood resources to families, communities, and other partners. External newsletters are regularly sent from the different agencies and content is consistently posted on departmental social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Furthermore, strong efforts have been made to schedule meetings with community members to ensure there are opportunities for their voices to be heard, such as with the PDG Subcommittee, made up of community partners in early childhood.

3. Collaboration with partners across the ECCE mixed delivery system in planning and implementing this activity, including parents and caregivers.

The voices of community members are spotlighted when making decisions about PDG B-5 projects related to them. Not only do these efforts ensure information that is generated and communicated by the state is culturally and linguistically accurate, but it allows for communities

to have a direct impact on the outcomes of early childhood work at the state. Partner collaboration will be critical in planning and implementing mixed-delivery partnerships. An example of this can be seen with the development of two videos featuring the early childhood impacts of Community Solutions Grantees, a community-driven grant program funded by braiding state and current PDG B-5 funds. These videos will be used in state reporting and give community-based organizations the ability to share their perspective on the early childhood system in Minnesota. The first video will feature families and staff in the home-visiting programs run by the Montessori American Indian Childcare Center and the Tserha Aryam Kidist Selassi Cathedral, an Ethiopian Church. The second video will feature the family, friend, and neighbor work of the Hmong Early Childhood Coalition. Representatives of each grantee organization have been present and active throughout the planning, script writing, filming, and now editing and translation processes of these videos. Their insights will ensure the final products are culturally and linguistically responsive and provide accurate information in plain language that is illustrative of these diverse communities.

Another way Minnesota has ensured partners are a part of the state's communications is through videos created with community members at the center and as a result of community-identified needs regarding transitions. Apoyando a nuestra niñez a tener una exitosa transición a kindergarten [Supporting our children to have a successful transition to kindergarten] was made in partnership with Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio after the organization, who is funded by a PDG B-5 Community Solutions grant shared a need. Additional videos are being co-created with community-based organizations that are Hmong-first, Spanish-first, and Somali-first on Early Childhood Screening and will be completed in spring 2023 on supporting toddler to preschool and preschool to kindergarten transitions.

Minnesota is especially proud of its transitions work and is completing a community-led project on transitions to support Black urban children. A collaboration of Black kindergarten and early childhood teachers, parents, and community members came together to design a resource that will be incorporated into an overall toolkit. This process will be replicated with multiple groups as a part of existing PDG B-5 work, starting with children with disabilities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional transitions supports have been created to support nature-based learning, including [Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Booklet](#), trainings, and communities of practices. All transitions work is being compiled into a comprehensive resource.

An essential tool in Minnesota is [Help Me Grow](#), which provides resources for families to understand developmental milestones and learn if there are concerns about their child's development. This helps families take the lead in seeking additional support or referring their child for a comprehensive, confidential screening or evaluation at no cost. This referral is a first step to access high-quality inclusive programs as well as IDEA Part C and Part B services. Minnesota's Help Me Grow is an interagency initiative of the departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, in partnership with all local service agencies. Help Me Connect is a sister system to Help Me Grow and provides more comprehensive resource connection in balance with Help Me Grow's developmental milestone information and referral platform.

Minnesota seeks to model how community voice is highlighted in program, policy, and practice decisions, as exemplified in through the provided examples. Mixed-Delivery Action Labs, described in detail in Activity Four, will continue this community-driven approach to planning and implementing family engagement. A primary mechanism that will be implemented as a part of Activity Three is the story bank described in Activity One. Through the story banking process, families and a wide range of family- and center-based child care, Head Start,

school-based and community organization-based providers, teachers, and administrators will be engaged to tell their stories and be a part of sensemaking of that story to inform the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs as well as local- and state- level program, practice, and policy. To further prioritize parent and family engagement, a Community Engagement Fellow (included in the proposal budget) will be dedicated to leading the use of the story banking tool - and ensuring that families and caregivers, particularly those most marginalized, are prioritized. The fellowship program is described fully in Activity Four.

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

1. Approach to supporting and disseminating best practices among B-5 providers, including workforce supports and trainings for ECCE providers.

To support and disseminate best practices to the early childhood workforce, Minnesota will use PDG B-5 funds to implement Mixed-Delivery Action Labs. The Action Labs will bring together local partnerships throughout the state made up of school districts/charter schools, Early Head Start and Head Start grantees, family and center-based child care programs, and community-based organizations, inclusive of early childhood special education. These local groups will work through a human-centered design process to answer key questions in their community to propel a local mixed-delivery model. Key process parameters include prompting local collaborations to:

- Define problems being experienced that could be remedied with a mixed-delivery approach including understanding Task Force recommendations;
- Consider the tailored needs of community including: focus on infants and toddlers, family engagement, children with disabilities, trauma-informed approaches, cultural- and linguistic-responsiveness, workforce needs (ex. extended hours), teacher recruitment and

compensation, transportation supports, food security, stable housing, mental health, comprehensive services, reduction in suspension and expulsion, and supports for additional locally-identified populations (for example: families experiencing incarceration, military families, foster care, etc.);

- Develop solutions that focus on efficiencies and coordinating aspects of a mixed-delivery approach including: the recruitment and enrollment of families into programs that align with their values and goals, collaboration across programs when children are in multiple settings for their care and education, professional development for early care and education providers, learning environment design, assessment of children, and transition from early care and education settings to kindergarten;
- Shift to high-level planning and supports such as: financial stability planning, data collection and reporting, identification of local comprehensive service providers and referral processes, and alignment of eligibility and enrollment, as scaffolding allows; and
- Define what systemic supports would be most helpful for the state to invest time, money, and resources in to improve mixed-delivery at the local level.

Minnesota has an opportunity to advance partnerships developed in PDG B-5 work with Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grants and Community Resource Hubs. Community Solutions grantees are Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian-led and serve organizations who lead projects defined by their community to improve child development outcomes related to the well-being of children of color and American Indian children from prenatal to grade three and their families, as well as reduce racial disparities in children's health and development from prenatal to grade three. Several grantees are working on projects directly related to child care and education and/or transitions and would be well suited to be a part of this

work. PDG B-5 Community Resource Hubs are navigators in their communities supporting families accessing comprehensive services. They too would be natural partners in supporting Mixed-Delivery Action Labs.

Minnesota will partner with the ECLDS and Statewide Longitudinal Educational Data System (SLEDs) to support local communities in understanding data. The ECLDS+SLEDs Regional Coaching Network is comprised of data coaches who work proactively with local schools, districts, colleges, and early care providers to assess local needs and encourage the use of Minnesota's longitudinal data systems to inform planning and policymaking. Data coaches will provide local action lab participants with training and a follow-up coaching session to help identify and interpret the data needed to make well-informed decisions.

Through this process a state team will work to foster feedback loops with the partnerships; reduce administrative barriers; and drive program, policy, and practice change based on what is heard at the local level. Based on engagement to date, taking steps to reduce operational costs for child care providers will be a likely topic. Staff from MDE are a part of Council of Chief State School Officers mixed-delivery conversations and have long provided coordinated technical assistance to mixed-delivery partnerships throughout the state. However, this will be the first attempt at a robust, comprehensive, and formalized process to support mixed-delivery.

The findings from New America's New Practice Lab also called for Minnesota to increase capacity for human-centered design including: qualitative design research, usability testing, user experience design, workshop facilitation, content design, product management, and data science. The contractor who facilitates the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs will provide training and coaching for state and local leaders to learn replicable human-centered design principles.

In the last few years Minnesota has diversified its workforce and integrated the cross-agency systems culture through hiring into permanent staff positions personnel initially hired into temporary grant-funded positions. Minnesota hopes to lean into this trend and contract with an entity such as the BUILD Initiative to host three Early Childhood Fellows who will be placed in state agencies to assist in implementing PDG B-5 work for one year. Components of the fellowship will mirror BUILD's Emerging Leaders Action Network fellowship, which Minnesota state staff participated in a condensed version of as a part of the state's initial PDG B-5 planning grant. One fellow will be dedicated to Mixed-Delivery Action Lab efforts. These Fellows will have early childhood policy and/or program backgrounds and will disseminate best practices among B-5 providers.

Minnesota will also participate in the Early Childhood Workforce Technical Assistance (TA) Peer Learning Initiative and Community of Practice offered through this funding opportunity.

2. A description of efforts to improve the training and experience of B-5 ECCE providers in the state, and strategies that will be employed.

Minnesota has a robust set of supports in place to improve the training and experience of ECCE providers. In addition to the general infrastructure of training and professional development maintained through both MDE and DHS, this includes a number of newer initiatives, many launched directly or indirectly through PDG B-5-related collaborative efforts:

- Empower to Educate, a workforce development program that connects aspiring early educators to training and job placement needed to launch their careers, and to a mentor who will support them through the early stages of their work in ECCE;

- Development of a Toolkit for Healing-Centered Practice, which offers a variety of resources for professionals who work with children prenatal to age six to approach their work in a way that is trauma-informed and promotes resilience (PDG B-5 funded);
- Revision of the State's Knowledge and Competency Frameworks to add three additional content areas: addressing cultural responsibilities, expanding trauma-informed care, and supporting multilingual learners. This expansion also involved development of new training modules for ECCE professionals related to the new content areas (PDG B-5 funded);
- State funding for the Center for Inclusive Child Care, which provides coaching to ECCE providers on a range of topics including inclusion of children with or at-risk of disabilities, management of challenging behaviors, children's mental health, best practices around health and safety, care for infants and toddlers, supports for FFN providers, and early childhood suspension and expulsion prevention; and
- A cross-agency working group focused on aligning state policies and practices to reduce the incidence of suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs. Primary actions identified include: reducing teacher/student ratios, increasing access to infant and early childhood mental health, and increasing professional development supports for early care and education providers, specifically on implicit bias and trauma-informed approaches.

While the needs assessment activities described earlier will help identify barriers or gaps within these existing initiatives, one major need already identified is recognizing with increased compensation the time, effort, and expertise that ECCE professionals put into developing these skills and competencies. As part of this proposed work, Minnesota will continue building out a framework for moving toward compensation parity across the mixed-delivery system that

communities will design through the Action Labs. Planned engagement related to compensation parity exploration is described in more detail in the next section.

Different ECCE settings in Minnesota are currently governed by different agencies (school-based, Part B, Part C, Early Head Start, and Head Start programs through MDE and licensed and certified programs through DHS). A gap that will likely be voiced in the needs assessment is variation and disjointedness across the training and professional development spectrum, depending on what setting an early educator works in. By expanding the presence of mixed-delivery partnerships across the state, Minnesota hopes to create a more collaborative, aligned environment where training, coaching, and consultation resources are available across settings and where providers in different settings can come together to learn from and with one another. As shared in interviews conducted by the PDG B-5 TA Center with existing mixed-delivery partnerships in Minnesota, ECCE professionals involved in a partnership found that sharing resources across programs led to more and easier access to training and coaching opportunities. Identifying opportunities to share professional development resources and creating joint opportunities for learning will be a key focus of the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs.

3. Strategies for developing or enhancing linguistic and culturally supportive pathways for attaining aligned credentials, certifications, and coursework across professional development and higher education for prospective and incumbent personnel including articulation options, to support aligned systems of service provision and a career ladder for ECCE professionals.

A primary identified barrier to developing better-aligned and more supportive career pathways for ECCE professionals in Minnesota is the lack of increases in compensation as professionals increase their experience and credentials. While early educators in Minnesota can

pursue coursework and training aligned with the Knowledge and Competency Frameworks and can move up the rungs of the existing Career Lattice, their compensation does not necessarily increase accordingly and abysmally low wages make it difficult for professionals to invest in continuing education. This makes persistence in this career path a challenge, particularly for professionals from historically marginalized groups who face additional linguistic or cultural barriers to career advancement. These needs will likely be echoed in the needs assessment and strategic planning period of this proposed project and will prioritize activities that will help us work toward compensation parity across the ECCE system.

The Task Force has been considering ECCE career pathways as part of their charge, including work to build a framework aligning career advancement steps with compensation increases based on the Minnesota Early Care and Education Wage Scale (with the intention to update the wage scale for inflation). Key to this framework is development of recommended processes for assessments of competency outside of the formal education system so that professionals can be recognized for their on-the-job experience and non-credit-bearing training in addition to more formal credentials.

As these Task Force conversations have unfolded, it has been clear that a career ladder linked to a wage scale as we conceive of it for a school-based or center-based ECCE program does not necessarily fit the business model of a family child care program as they may describe profit margins rather than hourly rates or annual income. In connection with the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs described above, focus groups of family child care providers will be convened. Through this process, family child care providers will engage to co-design a wage scale framework that meets the needs of their setting. This work will build on the findings and

recommendations of the Task Force and on learnings from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded workforce compensation efforts such as Minnesota's Child Care Stabilization Grants.

Minnesota's 2022 Governor's Proposed Budget included a variety of ECCE capacity-building supports including continuation of grants focused on compensation and extension of the Wayfinder (described below) and Empower to Educate (described above) programs. Though these proposals did not pass, there remains significant interest in advancing these or similar ECCE supports. The framework developed through these focus groups will be a foundational element of implementing potential future policy or program changes in this area, and of designing a mixed-delivery system that allows for compensation parity across settings. Targeted efforts for pathways must focus on what is most in demand from families who are looking for high-quality, affordable care that meets their cultural, linguistic and scheduling needs near where they live or work. Minnesota has prioritized pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse ECCE professionals in Grow Your Own efforts, and will prioritize this focus in all future efforts.

4. Strategies for recruiting and retaining the workforce addressing challenges identified in the most recent needs assessment and the strategies already implemented or to be implemented to address the increased availability of qualified providers throughout the state, especially in rural areas through partnerships with Head Start, resource and referral agencies, shared service providers, hubs, networks, and other strategies.

To address the pressing shortage of early educators in Minnesota, several strategies aimed at recruiting and retaining the workforce, including strategies for increasing compensation for ECCE workers, have been implemented. These strategies include:

- Launching Empower to Educate, described above, in partnership with Minnesota's child care resource and referral network, Child Care Aware of Minnesota. In addition to providing

support with training, job placement, and onboarding, Empower to Educate is proactively recruiting individuals across the state interested in beginning a career in early education. The program offers hiring bonuses as well as six-month retention bonuses and is funded with federal COVID-19 relief funds.

- Launching the Child Care Wayfinder project, providing resources and technical assistance to recruit individuals interested in starting a licensed family child care program or child care center. This project is housed in the Child Care Resource and Referral system and provides a one stop location for information and support for navigating the licensing process as well as financial resources to start up programs. It is funded with federal COVID-19 relief funds.
- Putting significant federal COVID-19 relief funds toward increased compensation, including a requirement that 70% of Minnesota's Child Care Stabilization Grant funds must go toward increased staff compensation, and increasing funding for REETAIN retention bonuses. Both of these strategies are time-limited based on the temporary nature of the federal COVID-19 relief funds. Investments are being evaluated through multiple channels to identify successes and learnings to inform future iterations of efforts to increase compensation.
- Implementing Grow Your Own programming with six early childhood programs as well as partnering with Family and Consumer Science classes in high schools to provide Child Development Associate certifications as a part of current PDG B-5 work.
- Conducting a shared services pilot project using federal COVID-19 relief funds. Two grantees received funds to offer shared services to family child care programs. These services include bulk purchasing, a shared substitute pool, business training, and business software access, among other supports that compliment recruitment and retention.

- Undertaking several studies, including the Minnesota Cost Model Study and Early Care and Education Workforce Study, to better understand the makeup of Minnesota’s ECCE workforce and the current compensation landscape.

Minnesota will draw on lessons learned from these existing initiatives to shape future work.

Having a stable, well-prepared ECCE workforce is key to developing a robust, well-aligned, high-quality mixed-delivery ECCE system – and getting to compensation parity is key to workforce recruitment and retention. Short of significant additional public investment in subsidizing ECCE systems, programs’ ability to increase compensation within the current system is limited because they operate on thin margins with little flexibility in costs. One promise of mixed delivery partnerships is in developing modes of operational support that can help individual programs achieve some of the benefits of scale. If neighboring programs can come together to collaborate and coordinate around elements such as professional development costs, transportation, coaching, assessment, curriculum, etc., they can put those savings toward increased compensation. Part of the work of participants in the Action Labs will be sharing insights and experiences for the development of a roadmap for how mixed-delivery partnerships can increase this type of operational support for programs. Lessons learned from the existing programs listed above will help inform these conversations and the recommendations emerging from the Action Labs will provide key insights for any future extension, expansion, or adaptation of these largely ARPA-funded supports. This roadmap will inform key actions state agencies can take to reduce the burden of operations for programs – including informing Activity Five implementation as well as ongoing program, policy, and practices across agencies.

In addition, Minnesota is committed to implementing a Compensation Parity Prototype as a part of this proposed continued PDG B-5 work. Community engagement, as well as the Task

Force, has shown that compensation parity is a critical next step to improving recruitment and retention and this opportunity will be used to advance it. Minnesota is also aware of the challenges of implementing compensation parity of a temporary nature. Therefore, a planning period will occur prior to implementation to ensure:

- Scaffolding of compensation recommendations in the Task Force implementation plan, which will be published in February 2023;
- Critical planning at the local level through Mixed-Delivery Action Labs;
- Incorporation of family child care feedback on the proposed wage scales;
- A thorough understanding of the impact on worker's economic benefits when a temporary boost in pay occurs and related clear communication from state agency staff. Partnering with Medical Assistance, SNAP, and other economic benefits programs will allow for this, as well as learning from a recent pilot on Universal Basic Income;
- Understanding the Minnesota Head Start Association's workforce compensation study;
- Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan alignment (detail in Activity Five);
- Incorporating findings from an analysis of the Minnesota Children's [Fiscal Map](#);
- Incorporating learning on how early childhood workforce compensation was impacted by recent federal COVID-19 pandemic response investments and what can be built on; and
- Decisions on key implementation logistics, including amount, duration, geographies, mechanisms, and more.

Minnesota is particularly interested in using this opportunity to advance compensation for infant and toddler teachers. With intentional planning, Minnesota will be able to prototype an approach (Activity 5) that lays the groundwork for a scalable solution.

Activity Five: Support Program Quality Improvement

1. Efforts to improve the overall quality of ECCE programs in the state, as required and informed by their state needs assessment.

Minnesota will complete Activities One and Two prior to implementing Activity Five – and will leverage the findings of the refreshed needs assessment and strategic plan to then support program quality improvement. Activities One and Two will be completed early in 2023 given that it will require compiling existing data, allowing Activity Five to begin in the second quarter of 2023. The approach to planning and implementing activities to improve the overall quality of ECCE programs in the state will continue to include strong engagement of those most impacted by the problem aimed to be solved. In Activity Five, the Compensation Prototype described in Activity Four will be implemented following the necessary planning period.

As the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis recently asserted, “the quality of child-teacher interactions and relationships is the most important factor in achieving positive developmental outcomes for children,” and “[t]he programs yielding the largest benefits [for children] tend to have relatively well-paid and prepared teachers” (Grunewald and Stepick, “What drives the cost of high-quality early care and education?”, January 2022). Colleagues at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), in *Early Care and Education: Profile of an Industry in Crisis*, assert that, “One result [of low compensation] is high turnover in the industry. The early care and education industry has a higher turnover rate than most other industries in Minnesota. In 2018, the annual turnover rate was 14.4% for the Child Day Care Services industry, while it was 5.9% in Manufacturing, 8.1% in Educational Services, and 8.3% in Healthcare & Social Assistance. Economy-wide in Minnesota, turnover was 9.1%. Turnover

increases costs and decreases quality in early care and education programs.” Turnover is also detrimental to a child’s development at a time when secure attachments are important.

By bringing a particular focus to the needs of the ECCE workforce in Activities One and Two, and by engaging in the planning period for the compensation pilot in Activity Four, Minnesota will develop a thoughtful plan to support increasing compensation, thereby improving the overall quality of ECCE programs. Compensation strategies will align with and build on existing strategies such as the Child Care Stabilization Grants, Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan (detailed below), and Task Force recommendations.

2. Planned approach will support statewide early strengthening professional development and career ladders, and other workforce efforts to ensure high-quality programming for families representing priority populations as identified in the state needs assessment.

Research findings by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) “reveal that when barriers to education are removed and resources are provided, the existing workforce has demonstrated success in earning bachelor’s degrees...These findings demonstrate that barriers reside within systems, not with the individuals who encounter them” (Petig and McLean, “Supporting a Diverse, Qualified Early Educator Workforce: Aligning Policy with Research and Realities”, December 2019). To strengthen professional development pathways and career ladders for the ECCE workforce, barriers must be removed and additional resources provided. This includes implementing strategies to compensate ECCE professionals in a way that meets their needs as a baseline and that increases commensurate with increases in education and experience. As the compensation pilot is developed, it will be integrated with the many existing

workforce and professional development initiatives described above to ensure well-aligned, well-supported, and well-compensated career pathways.

The Transforming the Workforce Group, who has historically focused on the development of more coherent professional development pathways for early educators, will be a partner in this work. Information on strengthening professional development and career ladders will also be available from Minnesota's Early Care and Education Apprenticeship Model, Early Care and Education Workforce Study, and the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs. Strengthening of professional development and career lattices is one action the state may be able to take to reduce administrative burdens at the local level. PDG B-5 work will allow action on our roadmap (Activity Four) to the extent this is defined as a need.

Research, including the CSCCE brief cited above, has consistently found that barriers to pursuing professional development and career advancement in ECCE are even higher for educators of color, educators who work with infants and toddlers (who tend to be paid even less than early educators overall), and educators from other historically marginalized communities. The diversity of the ECCE workforce is one of its major strengths, and something to build on for better serving the priority populations identified through PDG B-5 work. Addressing structural barriers and systemic inequities in access to career advancement opportunities, including finding ways to increase compensation, is critical to the development of a well-prepared workforce that can provide high-quality programming for families, focusing on priority populations.

3. How planned quality improvement activities ultimately increase access to high quality care, especially in traditionally underserved communities and for infants and toddlers and children with disabilities.

Significant racial disparities exist for many Minnesota children and their families who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian to access to high quality care. These disparities are also present for infants and toddlers as well as children with disabilities. In 2019, staff from DHS and MDE along with a small group of community partners participated in a national technical assistance opportunity with the intention to explore, develop, refine, and prioritize potential future changes to Parent Aware, the state's voluntary QRIS. Providing a common set of best practices for child care and early education and impacting over 55,000 children in nearly 3,000 programs throughout the state, Parent Aware is a prime system to promote and lead efforts to address equity issues as a means to improve access and opportunities for all Minnesota children to reach their full potential. Partners identified a need for more robust actions to increase racial equity and launched a process to develop a Racial Equity Action Plan in partnership with community members.

The community-partnered Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan (PAREAP) Advisory Committee focused on developing racial equity strategies to address the following five problems for Parent Aware: 1. Children of color are not receiving the same preparation and education that white children attending programs receive; 2. Parent Aware's structure does not equitably support educators in terms of creating and giving access to resources that will help them meet requirements; 3. There is a disconnect between the Parent Aware standards and indicators and the priorities of the communities they serve; 4. Elements have not been aligned/adjusted to reflect the expansion of the Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Educators to include cultural relevance (note: this expansion also includes competencies for multilingual learners and trauma-informed); 5. Bureaucracy means change is slow, and the system is rarely able to be responsive in real time.

The PAREAP Advisory Committee then identified four strategies to address these problems:

1. DHS works with an advisory group to develop a policy/standard that specifically addresses discipline and expulsion; 2. Address inequities in distribution and access to resources supporting programs and educators working in early childhood programs participating in Parent Aware; 3. Establish a Parent Aware Racial Equity Council made up of state agency staff and Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian-identified community partners to bridge the disconnect between Parent Aware and the communities it is intended to serve; and 4. Embed racial equity in workforce preparation and professional development for educators in the field and DHS grantees implementing Parent Aware supports. Work is now moving forward to implement the Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan including launch of a Parent Aware Advisory Committee which will serve the function of the Racial Equity Council and a specific structure of workgroups to implement the action plan strategies. Minnesota will continue to advance the work of the Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan in the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs and will also use it as a consideration for our Compensation Prototype planning.

As established earlier in this narrative, infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities will be a focus of Mixed-Delivery Action Labs and Compensation Prototype planning. Activities will ultimately work towards an increase in access to high-quality care. This will be done through prioritizing infant and toddler teachers in Compensation Prototype planning, as a particularly low-compensated workforce. It will also be done through Mixed-Delivery Action Labs prioritizing planning around a targeted focus on infants and children with disabilities.

4. How proposed activities align with and build on other statewide quality improvement efforts.

Minnesota is very eager to implement efforts that promote partnerships across programs and reduce the administrative burden on ECCE providers. One project likely to be supported, based on emerging findings from the Task Force and community engagement, is a coordinated administrative system between the Child Care Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarships. Minnesota has multiple funding streams that support young children's access to child care and early education programs. Those funding streams include Early Learning Scholarships (MDE; state funded) and Child Care Assistance Program (DHS; funded by CCDF). Early Learning Scholarships and the Child Care Assistance Program are each implemented by a reimbursement model where child care programs submit for reimbursement on behalf of families and receive a direct payment.

Early Learning Scholarships and the Child Care Assistance Program operate on two distinct payment systems. This increases the burden on ECCE programs, including Head Start, child care, and schools, requiring them to prepare, submit, and receive reimbursement in two separate processes that engage different platforms, different administrators, and different timelines. Providers have shared frustration in a variety of areas including having to navigate different policies and payment methods and the timeliness of payments. A discovery process to engage dozens of child care, Head Start, school district, county, state, and Early Learning Scholarship Administrators is underway as a part of the state's current PDG B-5 work. Advancing coordinated administrative efforts such as this will strengthen data use, monitoring and quality improvement, accountability, communication, effective governance, and decision-making. Most importantly, it will reduce the burden on ECCE providers and afford them more time to support children and families.

Colleagues at DEED, in [*Early Care and Education: Profile of an Industry in Crisis*](#), write “The child care business has historically operated with razor-thin profit margins and very little room to maneuver, as so many of their expenses are fixed costs. Staffing costs are typically 70% of child care centers’ expenses, with 20% going to facilities, leaving only 10% for program expenses, curriculum and administrative costs. As a business concerned with young children’s care and development, child care centers must comply with detailed regulations, including staffing ratios and space requirements. A typical 57-seat child care center in Greater Minnesota operates at a loss even at 85% capacity. It is important to note that 100% capacity is nearly impossible to reach, as children move in and out of different age groups, each with different compliance markers for staffing and space.” A shared administration system could lessen this burden. Recommendations from Activities One, Two, and Three will further define administrative burdens the state can pursue easing as a part of Activity Five work.

Early Childhood Workforce TA and Peer Learning Initiative Participation

Minnesota will be an eager participant in the Early Childhood Workforce TA Peer Learning Initiative and Community of Practice. The Early Childhood Workforce Specialist (MDE), Early Childhood Business Support Specialist (Children’s Cabinet) funded through Minnesota’s current PDG B-5 renewal grant, and to be determined representatives from DHS and possibly DEED will participate.

Minnesota has a history of actively engaging in PDG B-5 TA and has participated in a half-dozen workgroups, presentations, a podcast, and is in the process of co-developing briefs on mixed-delivery and equity. The PDG B-5 TA Center has been a critical support to PDG B-5 work implementation and is a frequently used resource for peer-to-peer consultation and

background research, including on early childhood workforce initiatives. Sustainability will likely be a key learning outcome of this TA.

Project Timeline and Milestones

PDG B-5 Planning Grant Activity Timeline		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ACTIVITY 1	Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment				
1.1	Assign a lead for the <i>Strategic Refresh</i> addendum	X			
1.2	Literature review of existing, community-informed documentation of mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce needs	X			
1.3	Finalize and submit a <i>Strategic Refresh Addendum</i>		X		
ACTIVITY 2	Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan				
2.1	Assign a lead for the <i>Strategic Refresh</i> addendum	X			
2.2	Summation of existing, community-informed documentation of mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce recommendations	X			
2.3	Finalize and submit a <i>Strategic Refresh Addendum</i>		X		
ACTIVITY 3	Maximize Parent and Family Engagement in B-5 System				
3.1	Execute contract for story banking tool	X			
3.2	Execute and implement communications contracts for accessible, translated, and plain language documents, as well as videos, graphics, and other tools to ensure accessible communications	X	X	X	X
3.3	Implement story banking tool with parents, families, and workforce		X	X	X
3.4	Conduct sensemaking sessions to move stories from the tool to action			X	X
ACTIVITY 4	Support the B-5 Workforce and Disseminate Best Practices				
4.1	Execute contract for Mixed-Delivery Action Labs		X		
4.2	Identify local Mixed-Delivery Action Lab Teams	X	X		
4.3	Implement Mixed-Delivery Action Labs		X	X	X
4.4	Complete final reporting for Action Labs				X
4.5	State staff participate in human-centered design training and coaching		X	X	X
4.6	Compensation Prototype planning	X	X		
ACTIVITY 5	Support Program Quality Improvement				
5.1	Use information from <i>Strategic Refresh</i> that points to solutions in reducing administrative barriers	X			

5.2	Identify key action(s) to reduce administrative barriers for programs		X		
5.3	Implement key action(s) to reduce administrative barriers for programs		X	X	X
5.4	Use information from planning in 4.6 to implement compensation prototypes			X	X
EVALUATION					
E.1	Execute contract for story banking tool	X			
E.2	Implement story banking tool with parents, families, and workforce		X	X	X
E.3	Conduct sensemaking sessions to move stories from the tool to action			X	X
E.4	Program Performance Evaluation Plan refinement and implementation	X	X	X	X
TRAVEL	4 staff attend 3-day PDG B-5 grantee meeting in Washington, D.C.				X
DISSEMINATION					
D.1	Hiring of PDG Manager, Communications Lead, DHS Lead, Children's Council Lead	X			
D.2	Communications contracting for accessible, translated, and plain language documents, as well as videos, graphics and other tools to ensure accessible communications	X	X	X	X
D.3	Establishment and implementation of Fellowship	X	X	X	X
D.4	Submission of a final report				X
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE					
T.1	Identify TA and Peer Learning Participants	X			
T.2	Participate in TA and Peer Learning		X	X	X

Minnesota anticipates completing Activities One and Two in early 2023, given that it will require compiling existing data, allowing Activity Five to begin in the second quarter of 2023.

There are several external factors with the potential to accelerate or decelerate overall early childhood efforts. As previously stated, Minnesota faces a major election cycle at the end of 2022 as well as a 2023 legislative budget session that has the potential to be transformative. Depending on the priorities of leadership and legislators, early childhood efforts, including those proposed in this narrative, may end up being a greater or lesser priority. However, legislative approval for PDG B-5 activities has been granted and Minnesota is prepared to implement the

proposed activities in any circumstance. Historical grant administration challenges around both hiring and the time it takes to execute contracts both have the potential to decelerate work. These hurdles have been identified and will be mitigated wherever possible by experienced grant management, human resources, and contracting staff at MDE.

Organizational Capacity

1. Responsibilities and roles of the lead entity's staff and its partner(s) are clearly described and substantiated, allowing them to meet the requirements of the program.

Minnesota has successfully led PDG B-5 work since 2019 through a cross-agency partnership with the departments of Education, Health, Human Services, and the Children's Cabinet. PDG B-5 work will continue to use a cross-agency governance structure, including regular engagement with agency leadership. The PDG B-5 Manager (who will be guided by the Directors at Children's Cabinet, MDE, DHS, and MDH) will be responsible for coordinating the overall administration, implementation, and evaluation of the grant project including complying with federal, programmatic, and contract regulations and procedures and reporting program progress to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Project Leads execute specific project activities, including the *Strategic Refresh* addendum, contracting and supporting the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs, implementing learning from family childcare on wage scales, and implementing compensation prototypes. Agency Leads include experienced representatives at the departments of Human Services (Tracy Roloff) and Children's Cabinet (Jenny Moses) who work with the PDG B-5 Manager to build relationships that advance cross-agency priorities; support staffing; execute cross-agency funding agreements; advise on communications, needs assessment, and strategic plan; and implement sustainability planning. Organizational charts for relevant aspects of each entity are provided in the Appendix.

2. Evidence of relevant experience and expertise to administer programs, and organizational capacity to fulfill their roles and functions, including oversight and management of federal funds.

Minnesota's prior and current PDG B-5 projects were developed by the Interagency Leadership Team (ILT), representing each of Minnesota's early childhood sectors (MDE, DHS, and MDH) and the Children's Cabinet. This same team will oversee implementation of PDG B-5 Planning Grant activities and ensure coordination with other state initiatives. Project work will continue to be coordinated by a seasoned PDG B-5 Manager, Amanda Varley, who has managed the timely implementation of activities, federal reporting, sustainability planning, hiring, budgeting, and governance, resulting in good standing with the past and current PDG B-5 projects. MDE, the fiscal agent and operational host for the PDG B-5 initial and renewal grants as well as the proposed planning grant (Governor's Letter provided in Appendix), has the needed expertise, infrastructure, capacity, and significant successful experiences providing financial and administrative oversight, management, monitoring, and reporting on large federal grant projects.

As previously described, Minnesota will proactively address prior challenges surrounding both hiring and retaining staff and fostering a pipeline for a diverse state workforce. This will be completed through a contract with an entity such as the BUILD Initiative. The BUILD Initiative has extensive experience implementing both a fellowship program and successfully holding a contract with the state of Minnesota for over five years, meeting deliverables, reporting, financial and communication expectations. They have an assigned liaison, Dr. Sherri Killins Stewart, who works directly with the state and has a track record of accelerating cross-agency engagement. Components of the fellowship will mirror BUILD's Emerging Leaders Action Network

fellowship, which Minnesota state staff participated in a condensed version of as a part of the state's initial PDG B-5 grant.

Three Early Childhood Fellows will be placed in state agencies to implement proposed work for one year in the following areas: 1. Mixed-Delivery Action Labs; 2. Early childhood workforce; 3. Story banking, sensemaking, and community engagement. Fellows will receive coaching and mentoring by both the contractor and state leadership. The intention of the Fellows opportunity is to foster relationship-building, professional development, collaborative culture-building, and equity while also advancing specific PDG B-5 activities.

Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder (Partner) Engagement

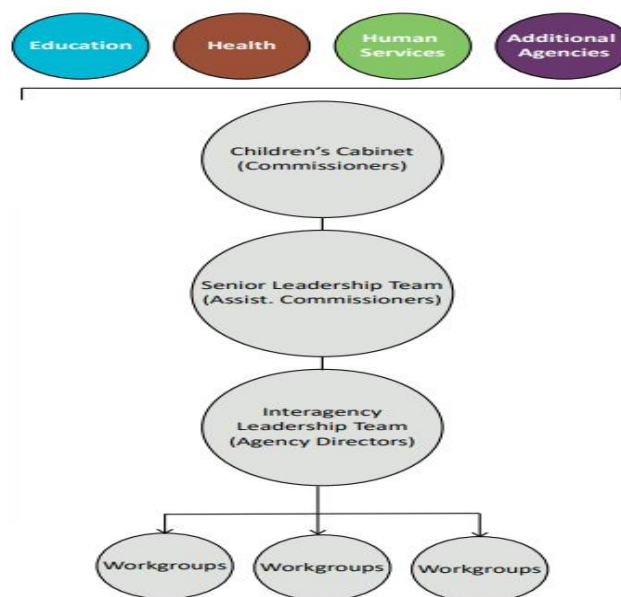


Figure 1. Meaningful governance and stakeholder (partner) engagement

Minnesota's PDG B-5 governance structure has been in place since project inception and mirrors the overall state agency governance. As depicted above, workgroups are focused on specific PDG B-5 activities and may be led by either a Project or Agency Lead. Key decisions are elevated to the ILT by the PDG B-5 Manager. This is the primary advisory body for PDG B-5 work and meets monthly for thirty minutes while also receiving more regular individual

updates from Agency Leads. In the uncommon case that a decision needs to be further elevated, it is brought to a convening of the agency Assistant Commissioners. Decisions elevated to this level are typically around budget, prioritizing PDG B-5 work in balance with other agency priorities, and major reporting. Finally, Minnesota Children's Cabinet members (who are state agency Commissioners) are informed of, and champions for, PDG B-5 activities. Should a decision not be reached by the Assistant Commissioners, it is elevated to Commissioners via the Children's Cabinet. Since Minnesota's first PDG B-5 application, external advisory has been streamlined by creating a PDG B-5 Subcommittee of the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, instead of having a standalone advisory body. This group advises the PDG B-5 Manager on project activities.

1. Chart that clearly identifies and differentiates which stakeholders have been involved and will be involved in the assessment, planning, and implementation of all activities, and how they will ensure representation from across the B-5 system including health and family support services. Specifically, the applicant identifies how parents and providers are supported to participate in stakeholder engagement.

Minnesota has a proven history of engaging parent voices in every PDG B-5 activity as well as overall needs assessment, strategic plan, evaluation, and sustainability planning. This is especially true of voices from families and providers furthest from opportunity. PDG B-5 work is advised by a Preschool Development Grant Subcommittee of the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, as mentioned previously, which looks forward to this opportunity to further formalize feedback loops through implementation of the story banking tool (Activities One, Three, and Five).

External Stakeholders (Partners)			
Role	Involvement in Initial Grant	Role in Renewal Grant	Role in Planning Grant
Parents and Families	Over 1,000 parents participated in Initial Grant engagement.	Continued community engagement in Activities 1&2 and representation in Activities 3, 5, 6.	Story banking Activity 3; Mixed-Delivery Action Labs Activity 4.
Family – and Center – Based Child Care Providers, Teachers, Home Visitors, and others working directly with children and families	Hundreds of providers, teachers, and home visitors participated in initial grant engagement.	Continued community engagement in Activities 1&2. Participation in Activity 3, and recipients of Activity 4 professional development.	Engagement in Activities 1&2; story banking Activity 3; Mixed-Delivery Action Labs & compensation planning Activity 4; Compensation prototypes Activity 5.
Children’s Cabinet Advisory Council and the State Advisory for Early Education and Care	This council was in transition during the Initial Grant, and were engaged in one listening session as a part of the needs assessment.	As the advisory body to the Children’s Cabinet, these councils can make recommendations regarding the PDG B-5 renewal grant.	As the advisory body to the Children’s Cabinet, these councils can make recommendations. A subcommittee advises the project directly.
Local Governments (Counties and Schools)	Due to timing, schools and counties were involved in the needs assessment and strategic plan through sampling, but not to the extent desired.	Local government representatives participate in advisement of Activity 3, example recipients of Activity 5, and completion of Activities 1&2.	Engagement in Activities 1&2; story banking Activity 3; Mixed-Delivery Action Labs & compensation planning Activity 4.
Tribal Nations	Community engagement events took place in all eleven Tribal Nations and in urban American Indian populations. The state received additional consultation on goals	Increased efforts in intentional Tribal Consultation throughout. This was supported through the hire of a Tribal Liaison.	Increased efforts in intentional Tribal Consultation throughout, especially in story banking Activity 3; Mixed-

	and strategies from Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care members.		Delivery Action Labs Activity 4.
State Advisory Councils and Task Forces	Contributors to Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan: B8 Workgroup; Early Childhood Systems Reform; Early Learning Council (State Early Childhood Advisory Council); Interagency Coordinating Council; LearnTogetherMN; Local Public Health Association of Minnesota; Start Early Funders Coalition; Title V Task Force; Voices and Choices for Children Steering Committee.	These organizations – and additional organizations – are partners in Activity 1&2. They are regularly provided with PDG B-5 updates and the opportunity to provide feedback.	Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force (sunsets after plan delivery on 2/1/23), MNAEYC, Transforming the Workforce Group, MIFs, Prenatal to Three Coalition, Interagency Coordinating Council, Minnesota Head Start Association, Child Care Aware, Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education and other associations will advise on compensation planning and implementation (Activities 4&5); story banking (Activity 3) and Mixed-Delivery Action Labs (Activity 4).
Local Government Associations	Minnesota Association of Counties and Local Public Health Association identified members for the PDG B-5 Planning and Advisory Committee	Continued relationships with Minnesota Association of Counties and Local Public Health Association with regular updates and opportunities for participation.	Continued relationships with local government associations through Mixed-Delivery Action

	and met regularly with PDG B-5 staff to advise on PDG B-5 work.	Increased relationship building with school district associations.	Labs in Activity 4.
Institutions of Higher Education	Participation in early childhood workforce participation activities.	Continued partnership in Activity 4.	Continued partnership in Activities 4&5.
Businesses	Business leaders were not engaged in a systematic way, though some members of business associations do sit on above mentioned advisory councils.	Increased opportunity for partnership and sharing of implementation grant activities and learning.	Targeted engagement in Mixed-Delivery Action Lab planning (Activity 4).
Legislators	Updated on the progress of the PDG B-5 Initial Grant.	Continued information sharing and relationship building to support collective impact in implementation.	Continued information sharing and relationship building to support collective impact in implementation.
Philanthropy	Regular updates on the PDG B-5 Initial Grant were provided to the Start Early Funders Coalition.	Continued information sharing with the Start Early Funders Coalition and increased relationship building with other philanthropic organizations to support collective impact in implementation.	Continued information sharing and relationship building to support collective impact in implementation.
Nonprofits and Community-based Organizations	Due to timing, nonprofits and community organizations were involved in the needs assessment and strategic plan through sampling. Some were active partners in the Planning and Advisory Committee.	Through the work of Activity 5, intentional relationship building with additional organizations. This includes collaborating with other state initiatives.	Continued information sharing and relationship building to support collective impact in implementation.
State Stakeholders (Partners)			
Role	Involvement in Initial Grant	Role in Renewal Grant	Role in Planning Grant

Family First Prevention Act Staff	Cross-membership with PDG B-5 and Family First Prevention Act Advisory Committees.	Director added to PDG B-5 ILT.	Director on PDG B-5 ILT and working on collective impact.
Title V	Shared learning and understanding in needs assessment processes.	Continued collaboration in PDG B-5 Activity 1 and grant evaluation.	Director on PDG B-5 ILT and working on collective impact.
MIECHV	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure.	Continued collaboration in PDG B-5 Activity 1 and grant evaluation.	Director on PDG B-5 ILT and working on collective impact.
IDEA Part C and Part B	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure.	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure and integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Director on PDG B-5 ILT and working on collective impact, especially with Mixed-Delivery Action Labs (Activity 4)
CCDBG	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure.	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure and integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Participation in PDG B-5 leadership structure and integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.
Head Start and Early Head Start	Integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Continued integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Continued integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.
Two-Generation Policy Network	Consultation and integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Continued consultation and integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.	Continued integration throughout PDG B-5 activities.
State Longitudinal Data System	Support in providing data for the needs assessment and strategic plan. Shared staffing on data-related activities.	Shared membership in Governance Committees and collaboration in Activity 6. Resource for learning in Activity 1&2.	Activity 3 story banking; Mixed-Delivery Action Labs Activity 4.
State Agency Program Staff	Reviewed and contributed to needs assessment and strategic plan.	Continued participation and support in Activity 1&2 as well as evaluation and subject matter expertise as required.	Continued participation and subject matter expertise as required.

2. Clear plan for sustaining key elements of their grant projects that have been effective in improving practices and outcomes for children and families, the key individuals and organizations whose support will be required to sustain these elements, and how their cooperation and collaboration will be maintained after federal funding ends.

Minnesota has been a leader among states in developing a comprehensive Preschool Development Grant Sustainability Planning Guide. This guide and its process solidified a cross-agency Director- and Assistant Commissioner- level commitment and mission to seeking sustainability of efforts, including staff time, funding, governance, etc. The current PDG B-5 renewal grant secured some sustainability dollars through the commitment of other funding streams, such as Community-based Child Abuse Prevention dollars. The Walz-Flanagan administration included a sweeping portfolio of PDG B-5 efforts in the Governor's budget for the 2022 legislative session. Unfortunately, those bills did not pass. Sustainable funding will be sought through both braiding existing resources and submitting legislative asks. Aligned recommendations with the Task Force are anticipated, which will amplify sustainability requests.

Funding for the ongoing maintenance of a story banking tool like Kansas Our Tomorrows is being actively pursued and secured through partnerships with CCBDBG, CBCAP, Head Start, and Part B and Part C and Title V. Mixed-Delivery Action Labs are being designed in a way to build local and state capacity to sustain efforts and grow the capacity of human-centered design principles within Minnesota.

Finally, Minnesota, through efforts such as PDG B-5 and the Children's Cabinet, has established strong cross-agency and state and local relationships. Relationships are a key factor in sustaining collaborative work and those should not waver when PDG B-5 federal funding

ends. These relationships were leveraged to create a common set of goals and actions that are a guiding star when opportunities for both private and public funding are presented.

Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPEP)

School Readiness Consulting (SRC), Minnesota’s contractor supporting the *Strategic Refresh*, recommends that Minnesota focuses efforts on planning and support for equitable, community-centered evaluation of community-driven initiatives. SRC found a need for increased capacity at the state level to conduct meaningful, equitable evaluation in partnership with grantees and other local partners implementing B-5 initiatives. Equitable, community-centered evaluation is aimed at creating sustainable and consistent evaluation practices that: assess outcomes that are meaningful to both the state and the community; enable the state to make outcome-based decisions about future investments; and empower communities with essential data to support continuous quality improvement and sustainability efforts. Minnesota aims to do just this by implementing the co-created story banking tool for the purposes of evaluation in addition to community engagement and needs assessment alignment.

Minnesota’s current PPEP was developed in the state’s first PDG B-5 grant and implemented in the renewal grant, both by the Improve Group. The update to the PPEP will reflect the updated direction of the work with a focus on mixed-delivery and workforce and the following goals and associated outcomes and key measures:

Goal 1: Make it easier for children and families – particularly the ones furthest from opportunity – to get what they need to thrive.
<i>Outcome 1: Implement the first critical steps of the Task Force recommendations.</i> -Key measure 1: Number of Task Force recommendations identified as complete or in progress by the end of 2023.
<i>Outcome 2: Build state capacity for continued transformative work through mentorship in human-centered design labs as well as implementing a fellowship.</i> -Key measure 1: Number of state staff completing human-centered design training or mentorship.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 2: Number of state staff indicating they feel more equipped to incorporate human-centered design methods into their work. -Key measure 3: Number of individuals who complete the fellowship program. -Key measure 4: Participant satisfaction with the process used for the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs.
Goal 2: Accelerate mixed-delivery and early childhood workforce efforts to build toward a well-supported early care and education ecosystem.
<p><i>Outcome 1: Launch local partnerships implementing mixed-delivery systems that address a wide variety of local needs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 1: Number of mixed-delivery partnerships launched. -Key measure 2: Percent of mixed-delivery partnerships sustained to the end of the grant period. -Key measure 3: Percent of mixed-delivery partnerships continuing beyond the end of the grant period. -Key measure 4: Action Lab participants' level of satisfaction with the plan developed by their local team.
<p><i>Outcome 2: Develop a clear understanding in partnership with family child care of their perceptions of the wage scale.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 1: Number of family child care providers participating in focus groups. -Key measure 2: Focus group participants' level of satisfaction with the focus group process. -Key measure 3: Qualitative feedback on the design of a proposed compensation framework for family child care.
<p><i>Outcome 3: Design and implement a roadmap to increase operational supports to child care.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 1: Number and percent of local Action Lab groups incorporating operational supports into their mixed-delivery plans. -Key measure 2: Qualitative feedback on a proposed roadmap for operational supports. -Key measure 3: Finalized roadmap based on feedback.
<p><i>Outcome 4: Learn about the short-term impacts of compensation parity using established wage scales.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 1: Percent of participating educators who remain involved throughout the entire compensation pilot process. -Key measure 2: Number and percent of participating educators who report experiencing increased financial stability during their participation in the compensation pilot(s). -Key measure 3: Qualitative feedback about how participating educators experienced the selected method for increased compensation. -Key measure 4: Qualitative feedback on how participating educators experienced and used increased compensation.
<p><i>Outcome 5: Reduce the administrative burden for early care and education providers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key measure 1: Qualitative feedback on joint CCAP-Early Learning Scholarships payment system and other administrative burden-reducing initiatives developed over the course of the grant.
Goal 3: Focus on children experiencing racial, geographic, and economic inequities, in order for all children in Minnesota to thrive within their families and communities.
<p><i>Outcome 1: Establish a shared community engagement structure across agencies that is used to inform policies, programs, and practice; needs assessments; and evaluation.</i></p>

- Key measure 1: Number of state staff trained and competent in using the shared community engagement structure.
- Key measure 2: Number of community members engaged through the shared community engagement structure.
- Key measure 3: Number of distinct state processes (policy developments, needs assessments, evaluations, etc.) using the shared community engagement structure.

To track and report on these outcomes and assess progress toward our goals, Minnesota will use existing administrative data and community engagement structures to reduce engagement fatigue for community members. Evaluation surveys will gather feedback from participants in events or projects carried out through this work.

In addition to being a strategy in itself and a tool for ongoing engagement and community feedback loops, the pilot of the Kansas Our Tomorrows tool will be an important input for the program performance evaluation plan. Questions will be included that are aimed at assessing the anticipated outcomes listed above as part of collecting people's stories through the platform. Participants' information, and participants' coding of their stories, will provide an understanding of how PDG B-5-funded initiatives have affected them and their communities.

The framework for the Mixed-Delivery Action Labs will include engaging participants in evaluative conversations at several points throughout the process in order to provide continuous quality improvement. Facilitators will gather notes and summarize themes across these conversations in order to assess successes, challenges, and barriers that are consistent across the action labs as well as those that are unique to specific partnerships.

For the compensation parity pilot, participants will be engaged to understand the effectiveness and ease of the selected method for compensation from both the early care and education program perspective and the early childhood education or provider perspective, as well as the perceived value of the compensation for the early childhood educator or

provider. Additionally, Minnesota will continue to participate fully in sponsored evaluations by the Departments and adhere to all established evaluation protocols.

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities

MDE served as the fiscal agent and operational host for the PDG B-5 initial and renewal grants and will do so again for the proposed planning grant. MDE has the needed expertise, systems, and capacity to ensure successful implementation and completion of the project. MDE's PDG B-5 Project Manager, Amanda Varley, possesses significant successful experience providing programmatic oversight; working with multiple partners and subrecipients; and reporting on large federal grant projects. Varley will again provide administrative and programmatic oversight of the project, ensuring compliance with federal, programmatic, and contract regulations and procedures she is quite familiar with and reporting program progress to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The PDG B-5 Project Manager will be assisted and supported by existing experienced staff and tested policies and procedures at MDE that will ensure proper fiscal and systems oversight and use of federal funds. Fiscal oversight will be provided by staff in the Agency Finance division. This division implements the state's budgetary accountability and compliance standards as well provides oversight of grants, contracts, and annual plan agreements to outside entities. An assigned Agency Finance Business Manager will monitor and track the grant budget, prepare fiscal reports, and maintain accountability and compliance with the federal grant regulations. Contracts staff will create, execute, and monitor subrecipient agreements. The Procurement team will complete all purchasing transactions and travel bookings, ensuring state laws and regulations concerning the purchase of goods and services are followed. The Budget and Compliance unit maintains accounting system security controls. The Business Continuity

and Risk Manager conducts division and agency-wide continuous improvement projects. The Data Governance Team's work encompasses components of data analytics, data practices, records retention, and communications. The data governance structure and policy supports the collection, management, and use of data, as further described below.

Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act requires all state agencies to enact policies and procedures governing data collection, protection, and access. MDE's Data Governance Policy supports staff in the collection, management, and use of data across all agency divisions and programs. All data (both public and private) collected, managed, shared, and/or used by MDE is governed by this policy, including data sent to MDE as well as data MDE sends to external entities. The aforementioned Data Governance Team establishes responsibility for data, organizing program area staff to collaboratively and continuously improve data quality and use through the systematic creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities, and procedures. The Data Stewards Committee helps communicate data governance decisions and data projects to program divisions, brings data projects and data issues for discussion and recommendation to the Data Management Committee (which establishes decision-making authority and makes recommendations on data governance topics, issues, and projects for the Data Stewards Committee and Data Governance Coordinator), and provides work on specific data governance tasks. Records confidentiality, retention, and disposition will follow established records management guidance from this expert team.

Dissemination Plan

Minnesota has a well-established communications plan as a part of existing PDG B-5 work and historically has prioritized funding for dissemination. The key goals of the communications

plan include: streamlining interagency collaboration, increasing awareness about early childhood initiatives, connecting families to services and supports, and ensuring communications are culturally and linguistically affirming and accessible. Several engagement and discovery processes have shown that knowledge about available programs, services, and resources is a key shortfall and intentional activities to increase knowledge for key audiences is critical to optimize any program investments. The state's communications plan addresses both internal and external dissemination and includes evaluation through social media metrics, website traffic, and diversity in methods of communication.

Dissemination strategies include ongoing updates to the Preschool Development Grant website, monthly internal memos to dozens of cross-agency state partners, and monthly leadership team meeting. As opportunities arise, PDG B-5 staff will continue to participate in local and national conferences, podcasts, conduct social media campaigns, legislative briefings, and coordinate agency and Governor press releases. Marketing campaigns for specific projects in the current PDG B-5 renewal grant have been implemented, such as Help Me Connect.

As a part of previous grant evaluation, an equity audit of PDG B-5 communications was conducted in order to continuously improve communications and ensure targeted audiences are reached in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. Activities Two, Three, and Four include funding for prioritizing communications in this manner.

Third-Party Agreements

Signed Letters of Commitment from PDG B-5 project partners DHS and the Minnesota Children's Cabinet are provided in the Appendix. The letters describe their respective roles and responsibilities for project activities and the support and resources committed.

Project Budget and Budget Justification

1. Clear and detailed budget justification consisting of a budget narrative and the related line-item budget details.

The project budget was entered in the Budget Information Standard Form, SF-424A. A budget justification consisting of a budget narrative and the related line-item budget details for the 12-month project period follows. Costs are reasonable, allocable, appropriate, and commensurate with the types and range of activities and services to be conducted and the project vision and outcomes. *Travel costs to send at least four individuals to Washington, D.C. to attend a 3-day meeting have been included, as required.*

Personnel. Positions are budgeted by state job classification. Personnel at Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).	\$175,000
1.0 FTE PDG B-5 Manager. The cross-agency manager of PDG B-5 projects including coordination of planning, implementation, and evaluation of all grant activities; coordinating budgets and resources; managing contracts; leading federal reporting; facilitating Project Lead Team and Interagency Project Team meetings; creating and implementing communications plans; communicating and summarizing progress to federal program and budget officers; and spending significant time coordinating with other state and federal programs for collective impact and engaging with external partners on grant activities. \$95,000	
1.0 FTE PDG B-5 Communications Lead. Leads creation and implementation of the communications plan. \$80,000	
Fringe Benefits. Fringe benefits are determined by state position classification. Fringe benefits include the employer's portion of health, dental, and life insurance, social security and Medicare tax, and retirement contributions.	\$60,000
1.0 FTE PDG B-5 Manager @ \$30,000	
1.0 FTE PDG B-5 Communications Lead @ \$30,000	
Travel. Travel costs are in accordance with Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements Cost Principles for Federal Awards (200.472 Travel Costs) as well as State of Minnesota policies. Costs are based on maximum reimbursement rates in Minnesota's Commissioner's Plan: federal mileage rate, \$42/day for meals in non-metropolitan areas and \$50/day in metropolitan areas (as designated in the Plan), and lodging costs that are reasonable and consistent with the facilities available. Out of state trips also include airfare, airport transportation, and event registration, as applicable.	\$6,800
4 staff attend 3 day meeting in Washington, D.C., as required. Costs are based on lodging for three nights and four days. Air: \$500/person=\$2,000; Hotel: \$300/person x 3 nights x 4 people=\$3,600; Food: \$50/day x 4 day x 4 people= \$800; Ground Transportation: \$400 =\$6,800	
Equipment. None	
Supplies. None	
Contractual. MDE follows all federal and Minnesota procurement standards.	\$450,000
Minnesota Information Technology Central or other IT contractor, if necessary. Continued work on reduction in administrative burden such as through a CCAP and Scholarship shared administrative system (Activity 5) @ \$250,000.	
Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) 0.5 FTE PDG B-5 Lead is responsible for the overall coordination and advancement of grant activities at DHS @ \$75,000.	

Minnesota Children's Cabinet 1.0 FTE PDG B-5 Lead is responsible for the overall coordination and advancement of grant activities at the Children's Cabinet @ \$125,000.	
Other. Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) consultant, local travel, professional services, space, printing and publications, training, staff development, and administrative costs.	\$3,143,334
Contract for Mixed-Delivery Action Labs. Collaboratives of family- and center-based child care, school districts, Head Starts, and community-based organizations (Activity 4) with funding for each collaboration as well as participant recruitment, compensation, outreach to family child care providers regarding the wage scale and human-centered design training and coaching for state staff @ \$850,000.	
Contract for a Fellowship Partnership. Anticipate a contract with an entity such as the BUILD Initiative. Components of the fellowship will mirror BUILD's Emerging Leaders Action Network fellowship. Estimating three fellows to support the following concrete outcomes: 1. Mixed Delivery Action Labs; 2. Early Childhood Workforce; 3. Story banking, sense making, and community engagement. Three fellows estimated @ \$350,000.	
Contract(s) for Evaluation. Advancement of story banking tool and Program Performance Evaluation Plan Refinement and Implementation @ \$315,334, which meets the required 5-7% allocation to plan, develop, and begin to implement the program performance evaluation plan.	
Contract for Communications. Support for project communication needs, including closed-captioning, translations, videos, graphic design, interpretation, and community stipends for co-development @ \$100,000.	
Contract for Compensation Parity Work. Advance understanding of early childhood compensation through provider engagement, planning, and implementation of a compensation parity prototypes described in Activities 4 and 5 @ \$1,500,000.	
Rent. \$9,000 per MDE grant-funded FTE (2) @ \$18,000. Rent is not included in MDE's indirect cost rate agreement.	
PDG B-5 Project Supplies. Meeting room rental, materials, printing and publication, and related office supplies for PDG B-5 work @ \$5,000 based on prior related work.	
Project In-State Travel. Regional meetings and site visits for PDG B-5 work @ \$5,000 based on prior work.	
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	\$3,835,134
Indirect Charges.	\$164,866
Calculated on modified total direct costs at current federally approved rate of 17% (rate agreement attached).	
TOTAL COSTS	\$4,000,000

2. The amount projected to be spent for each of the identified activities, along with a description of how these funds will be used; the amount of grant funding to support technical assistance and program performance evaluation-related activities; and travels costs for at least four individuals to attend a 3-day meeting in Washington, DC.

Activity 1: \$108,333 1/3 PDG B-5 Manager, DHS PDG B-5 Lead, and Children's Cabinet PDG B-5 Lead @ \$108,333
Activity 2: \$208,333 Project-related communication needs @ \$100,000 and 1/3 PDG B-5 Manager, DHS PDG B-5 Lead, and Children's Cabinet PDG B-5 Lead @ \$108,333
Activity 3: \$116,668 Story banking, sense making, and community engagement fellowship
Activity 4: \$1,176,666 Mixed-Delivery Action Labs @ \$850,000; Mixed-Delivery Action Lab fellowship @ \$116,666; Compensation parity planning @ \$100,000; PDG B-5 Communications Lead @ \$110,000
Activity 5: \$1,766,666 Continued IT work on reduction in administrative burden @ \$250,000; Early Childhood Workforce fellowship @ \$116,666; Compensation parity prototype implementation @ \$1,400,000
Program Performance Evaluation Plan: \$315,334 Advancement of story banking tool and Program Performance Evaluation Plan refinement and implementation; 5-7% of annual budget, as required
Technical Assistance: \$108,334 1/3 PDG B-5 Manager, DHS PDG B-5 Lead, and Children's Cabinet PDG B-5 Lead @ \$108,334
Travel: \$11,800 In-state and travel for four to Washington, D.C. for meeting, as required
The remaining \$187,866 in the proposed budget is allocated to rent, supplies, and indirect costs as detailed above.

3. How the state will address the 30 percent cost sharing or matching requirement, and a stated commitment that it will meet the match by the end of the project period.

Commitment of Non-Federal Resources. Required 30% match.	\$1,200,000
MDE \$1,200,000: Early Learning Scholarships were established in state statute in order to close the opportunity gap by increasing access to high-quality early childhood programs for children three to five years old. To be eligible to accept early learning scholarships, an early childhood program must participate in Parent Aware.	
Minnesota will meet the required match of at least 30% by the end of the 12-month project period.	