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Project Summary/Abstract

Project Title: Together/Juntos: Everyone, Together, Working for Maryland's Children

Applicant Name: Steven Hicks, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood (DEC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Address: 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Contact Phone Number: (410) 767-0342 **E-Mail Address:** Steven.Hicks@Maryland.gov

Web Site Address: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/>

Over the last year, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Department of Human Services, and Department of Health, together with parents, child care providers, and other stakeholders, have taken a careful look at how the state works to support its most vulnerable young children and families. Through town hall meetings, focus groups, surveys, a gap analysis of infant and early childhood mental health services, and an examination of data from numerous sources, the state has gained an understanding, like never before, of the needs of parents and stakeholders, what works to address those needs, and where services and capacity must be expanded. The activities of the past year have allowed the state to refine its vision and theory of change for supporting vulnerable children and families, particularly multilingual children and children with disabilities or developmental delays; create a strategic plan for addressing those needs; and begin the implementation of core activities that support better coordination and collaboration among state agencies to promote child and family well-being.

To continue to move the system forward, this grant application presents a plan that promotes a robust and equitable early childhood care and education system by addressing the most pressing needs of the state with an emphasis on supporting infants and toddlers, engaging in two-generation strategies and trauma-informed care, and supporting children and families in rural areas. Similar to Maryland's Initial Grant, the heart of the state's collaboration and coordination efforts continues to focus on data system modernization and leveraging the efficiencies of MD THINK, Maryland's statewide data system that has integrated the systems of the Maryland Departments of Human Services, Health, Juvenile Services, as well as the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. MSDE's partnership with MD THINK will allow for a coordinated application, eligibility determination, and enrollment process; the creation of a unique child identifier; and the ability to better engage in continuous quality improvement and data-driven decision making.

The grant activities outlined in the application build on Maryland's strong state and local early childhood governance structure, programs, policies, and funding. The activities proposed are a direct response to stakeholder needs as captured by the needs assessment and will generate system improvements and provide direct services that move the state toward its new vision that *All children and their families in Maryland will thrive* in a system where each child has the opportunity to access a high-quality early childhood experience, arriving at school with a healthy body, healthy mind, and the foundational knowledge and skills needed to succeed; and that every family has access to the resources needed to be effective as their child's first and most important teacher and advocate.

Project Description

Expected Outcomes

Over the last ten years, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has used federal funding through the *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge* (RTT-ELC) and legacy *Preschool Development Grants* (PDG) program, along with *Child Care and Development Block Grant* (CCDBG) funding increases, to create a more coordinated, efficient, and impactful mixed-delivery system of high-quality early childhood care and education (ECE) programs and services. The state has sustained much of these investments through state and private funding. To accomplish this, Maryland has a consolidated governance structure within MSDE, which administers and coordinates the majority of the state's ECE programs, houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, and oversees the state and regional Early Childhood Advisory Councils (ECACs).

The needs assessment (NA) work of the last year indicates that there is much work to be done to meet the state's ultimate vision for children and families. The program performance evaluation plan (PPEP) included in Activity Six clearly articulates the outcomes of the grant which focus on four core areas: (1) a modernized and fully integrated statewide early childhood data system to support coordination and collaboration across agencies; (2) a stronger early childhood workforce resulting from a better professional development (PD) infrastructure; (3) the increased capacity of Maryland's local early childhood advisory councils (LECACs) and community organizations to support local needs, particularly those of infants and toddlers; and (4) more stable and empowered families with maximum choice for quality ECE.

Approach - Activity One: PDG B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment

1. Status of Maryland's Comprehensive and Periodic Statewide Needs Assessment

As a primary deliverable of Maryland's initial PDG B-5 grant (Initial Grant), MSDE, in a collaborative partnership with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), conducted a comprehensive statewide assessment of early ECE stakeholder and system needs.

The state worked to ensure that the voices of ECE stakeholders from every aspect of the system were incorporated into the NA process, including parents, early childhood educators and providers, program administrators, libraries, schools, members of the higher education and professional development communities, local business and government leaders, advocates, and others. This entailed a robust, multifaceted process that incorporated: 1) 18 Town Hall meetings of 686 participants in total; 2) Stakeholder Surveys administered in seven languages designed for subgroups of parents, providers, and community partners resulting in 1,281 total respondents; 3) Focus Groups conducted in both English and Spanish among parents, providers, and community partners involving 179 total participants; and 4) a review of 107 documents produced within the last five years that included past NAs and strategic plans (SPs), and other state reports.

Overall, the PDG B-5 Statewide Comprehensive NA resulted in four reports: 1) *Together-Juntos*: Statewide Needs Assessment Report; 2) *Voices from the Field*: Town Hall Report; 3) the Statewide Survey Report; and 4) the Statewide Focus Group Report. The final NA report, *Together-Juntos*, was submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in September 2019 and approved. Maryland incorporated an additional report in assessing its assets, gaps, and needs, *Developing an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Professional Development System in Maryland: A Gap Analysis and Strategic Plan*.

Findings from the Statewide Comprehensive and Periodic Needs Assessment: Maryland is home to approximately 440,000 children birth through age five. Children in ECE settings are cared for

through a robust mixed-delivery system of nearly 12,000 different programs, providers, and settings. These include private and public school- based programs, Head Start grantees, licensed family child care (FCC) homes, center-based providers, informal relative-care providers, as well as other faith-based and community-based programs. Over 52,000 three- and four-year-old children are served in the state’s mixed-delivery prekindergarten program, including over 26,600 children in public school settings and 21,600 children in centers. Family child care homes account for about 22% of Maryland’s birth to age five capacity and account for only about 8.8% of capacity for four-year olds.¹

Over 9,000 children from birth to age five are cared for through nineteen Head Start programs, thirty-five Early Head Start programs, and three Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships. There are nearly 4,000 children in employer-sponsored child care. The vast majority of children birth to age five in the state—over 300,000 children—are cared for in licensed child care programs, with the majority in FCC homes. In addition to children in these different forms of care, Maryland serves 18,302 children through the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP), or Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, Early Intervention (EI), and 12,313 children through Preschool Special Education or IDEA Part B, Section 619 (ECSE). The state serves 4,000 children and their families through the 58 Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) and state-funded Home Visiting Programs.

Maryland has made significant progress toward its vision for a high-quality, mixed-delivery system. Key successes include the doubling of the state’s income eligibility level for the child care subsidy program and dramatically increasing provider reimbursement rates. These increases, in

¹ Maryland Family Network. (2019). *Childcare demographics 2019*. Retrieved from <http://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019Demographics-with-cover.pdf>

addition to new licensing requirements that help keep more children safe and healthy in ECE settings and support quality with lower ratios and teacher requirements, maximize parental choice and are considered a major success in the state.

Maryland's extensive NA process provides critical insights regarding the state's ECE system and key takeaways to inform both the development of the state's B-5 SP as well as this proposal. The NA findings are summarized briefly here, and referred to throughout the body of the proposal as they relate to specific activity areas.

Maryland has a longstanding record of investing in ECE, as demonstrated by the recent increase in Pre-K funding and expansion of access to higher-valued child care scholarships (subsidies). While these policies have eliminated the waiting list for child care subsidies, many families, including middle-income families, find ECE prohibitively expensive, especially programs of high quality. The state defines quality through its quality rating and improvement system, Maryland EXCELS. However, only 58% of the nearly 8,000 licensed child care programs are enrolled in the voluntary rating system with most in the lower levels. Many rural areas, defined as 18 of the 24 jurisdictions where there is geographic isolation, lack of transportation, and lack of access to and availability of social services, are plagued by "child care deserts"—areas in which there are few child care programs and rarely at the highest levels of quality. Although Maryland has established an extensive state and local governance infrastructure through a statewide ECAC and 24 LECACs, policies and oversight across systems are still fragmented. Parents reported administrative hurdles when accessing affordable care and subsidies, as well as a range of other critical services, including screening and referrals related to mental and behavioral health, special needs, and other developmental supports.

Families across Maryland also said they find it difficult to find the information they need about what programs and services are available. They reported struggling to navigate the system and have limited access to ECE programs, especially for children birth to age three, as well as programs that address trauma-informed and two-generational approaches. Families also reported challenges in accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate services for multi-language learners, and high-quality inclusive programs for children with special needs. The families that most acutely feel the absence of affordable ECE options are rural families, immigrant families, and those experiencing adversity, including families who struggle with homelessness. Both low-income and middle-income families indicated that it is difficult to find ECE programs they can afford and easily access. Overall, families expressed wanting to maximize opportunities for engagement in their child's growth and development, as well as in the early childhood system as both advocates and knowledgeable consumers.

ECE professionals also identified areas for systemic improvement, including improving their knowledge and skills through better access to quality teacher preparation and PD programs. ECE professionals advocated for a system with a stronger and more aligned infrastructure. Another area identified for improvement by both parents and ECE professionals is transitions among early childhood programs and services, as well as from ECE programs into kindergarten and the early grades. While every local school system has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) established with Head Start programs, they vary widely in their comprehensiveness and fidelity to practices. Focus groups conducted as part of the NA held with Spanish-speaking families corroborated the need for culturally responsive transition activities and resources provided in multiple languages. Feedback from educators, providers, and community partners verified that the connections

between ECE providers and school personnel must be stronger and start earlier so that all families and children are truly prepared for kindergarten.

Finally, the NA revealed stakeholders' hope for immediate modernization of the ECE data system statewide. Data-driven decision making is made difficult because much of the ECE data is stored within individual program information systems, rather than in an integrated statewide network. ECE stakeholders noted that assigning each child a unique identification number would allow agencies to share information more easily, improve families' access to services, and expand programs to ensure that no child misses an opportunity from which she or he could benefit. As discussed later in *Activity Six*, work on this issue began the initial grant year and will continue during the PDG B-5 Renewal grant (Renewal Grant).

Finally, the NA yielded findings regarding the status of ECE facilities throughout the state which will be further explored through a statewide, comprehensive facilities study (see **Project 1.2**). During the NA process, stakeholders did not indicate a high level of concern about the quality of facilities except in Baltimore City, where ECE providers and parents raised the issue of high lead levels in older buildings.

In summary, Maryland's NA provided important insights: 1) Families, especially those who are vulnerable (defined below), experience limited access to ECE services; 2) Families struggle to navigate a fragmented ECE system and are often unaware of the programs and services available to them; 3) ECE professionals experience barriers to accessing teacher preparation and PD programs, which leads to a shortage of qualified staff across the state; 4) Data-driven decision making is made more difficult by gaps in coordinated data systems; and 5) The state's strong state/local governance infrastructure can be better leveraged to improve how young children and their families access and experience the ECE system.

The NA findings provided critical information that helped the state refine the definition of key terms; better identify the populations that need to be targeted; assess the availability and quality of current ECE programs; focus on strategies to engage families in trauma-informed and two-generation approaches; highlight issues with coordination and collaboration of programs and the transitions before and into school; and identify gaps in the state’s data system. The recommendations that are provided in the NA reports serve as the foundation for the state’s SP.

As noted in Maryland’s Initial Grant application, several of the ECE system’s coordination challenges emerge from a lack of consistent definitions of key early childhood terms across programs. As a result of the NA process, the state has updated definitions of several key terms based on stakeholder input. The state now defines “vulnerable families” more broadly as families experiencing adversity, which may include families with children in foster care; children facing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); children experiencing domestic violence, poverty, or homelessness; children living in rural areas; children with special needs; children of incarcerated parents or parents struggling with substance abuse; and immigrant and multi-language learners.

The NA has allowed state and local leaders and stakeholders to share and learn key lessons about the ECE system’s attributes and gaps. The findings from Maryland’s NA are the foundation for the prioritized goals, actions, and indicators (discussed in *Activity Six*) of the state’s iterative strategic planning. Ultimately, the process underscored the need for ECE state system development that promotes equity, trauma-informed care, two-generation opportunities for families, more coordinated and better communicated service infrastructure, and integrated use of data that supports accountability and systemic improvements.

2. Periodic Update of the Needs Assessment and Addressing Gaps

MSDE, along with MDH and DHS, will periodically update and enhance the statewide NA in two primary ways. First, the agencies will continue ongoing communication with local communities, including participation in each jurisdiction's quarterly LECAC meetings to discuss the statewide NA and SP. In addition, the state will provide grants to LECACs to support additional local NA work, strategic planning, and coordination (see Subgrants section). The information collected through these local processes will inform recommendations regarding how the state agencies can support these local efforts.

Second, the state will replicate the initial NA process in the final year of the Renewal Grant. This process will inform decisions about the sustainability of existing activities and new initiatives that may need to be implemented. In addition, it will provide the opportunity to build relationships with stakeholders across the ECE system to better understand the impact made by the Renewal Grant activities and provide additional context for the findings that emerge from the program performance plan.

3. Engaging Parents and Stakeholders in Assessing What Has Been Learned

From the outset of the Initial Grant, parents have been intentionally engaged as primary stakeholders, as an intended audience for the NA results, and as a target population for the SP activities. Parents and a wide range of stakeholders were actively involved in community roundtables (described in *Activity 3*) to assess what was learned from the NA and determine the state's strategic direction for the ECE system. Other stakeholders included private providers, community advocates, business leaders, health professionals, school district leaders, and members of the military. These strategies will be replicated in our ongoing, periodic statewide NA processes and co-construction of our updated statewide SP.

4. Outcomes and Milestones

The work to update the NA will result in a number of clear and measurable outcomes, including: 1) 24 local needs assessment reports and LECAC plans, and a statewide analysis and summary of the plans with recommendations; 2) Opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including Town Halls, Focus Groups, and Surveys; and 3) An updated statewide NA report that incorporates additional ongoing and periodic statewide NAs, including the Governor’s Home Visiting Report, the Child Care Market Rate Survey, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan. **Table 1.1.** provides a timeline and milestone for the NA process during the Renewal Grant years.

Table 1.1. Timeline and Milestones for Updating Needs Assessment

Milestones	Oct - Dec 2019	Jan - June 2020	July – Dec 2020	Jan – Dec 2021	Jan – Dec 2022
Share NA/ SP with additional stakeholders	X				
Issue sub-grants to LECACs		X		X	X
Quarterly ECAC/LECAC meetings on ongoing NA/SP processes		X	X (July)		
Review LECAC grant reports, summary with recommendations				X (January)	
Ongoing communication with ECAC, LECACs, and stakeholders	X	X	X	X	X
Replicate initial statewide NA process					X

Activity Two - PDG B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan

1. Strategic Planning Process, and Timeline for Completion

A draft SP has been developed and will be refined through the engagement of a full range of state stakeholders, including parents. MSDE, MDH, and DHS cohosted a series of eight SP Community Roundtables throughout the state. These roundtables built on the success of the Town Hall format, and were made further accessible by taking place in the evenings, during the day, and on Saturdays. In addition, strategic planning sessions were facilitated among the state ECAC, as

well as other coordinating bodies, including the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and the WIDA Early Years Steering Committee, a new advisory group formed during the Initial Grant period. By reviewing and collectively analyzing the NA findings, stakeholders came to consensus on a cohesive and comprehensive set of goals. The draft SP is currently posted on MSDE's website for public comment. It will be finalized and submitted to ACF before the end of the Initial Grant period, and will set the course for Maryland's five-year SP.

Beginning in January 2020, subcommittees made up of ECAC and LECAC members, as well as other key stakeholders, including parents, will be tasked with reviewing the metrics and measurable indicators for each goal and strategic action step. Moving forward into years 2-4 of the Renewal Grant period, the ongoing process of development and reflection for Maryland's statewide SP will involve a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities and feedback loops. At the end of the third grant year, the initial comprehensive NA protocol will be implemented again. An updated five-year SP will be released for public comment and reviewed in 2024 following the completion of the proposed Renewal Grant 3-year timeline (**See Table 2.1**)

Table 2.1. Timeline and Milestones for SP

	Oct - Dec 2019	Jan - June 2020	July – Dec 2020	2021	2022
Finalize actions/indicators in 5-Year SP	X				
Submit 5-Year SP to ACF	X				
Release updated 5-year SP		X			
Continue feedback loops with ECAC/LECAC's on 5-Year SP Implementation			X (July)	X	
Replicate initial NA process					X
Development of updated 5-year SP					X

Working with stakeholders, MSDE is currently reviewing federal, state, and local statutory requirements to identify barriers for future coordination. For example, MDH has regulations

addressing lead testing within child care facilities that is in conflict with child care regulations. MSDE is working with stakeholders to overcome these roadblocks.

3. Progress and Implications for Activities Being Proposed

Maryland's SP is made up of goals, key strategic actions, measurable indicators, and outcomes which will be continually reviewed and refined. The strategic actions and measurable indicators are discussed throughout this application. An overview of the goals is presented in **Table 2.2**. A more comprehensive discussion of the strategic actions and indicators associated with each goal is presented in *Activity Six*.

The SP has important implications for the state's vision, logic model, and governance structure. As a result of the NA and SP processes, Maryland's vision is now: *All young children and their families in Maryland will thrive*. The mission of Maryland's B-5 ECE system is to develop a well-coordinated and integrated system of programs, supports, and services where each child in the state has the opportunity to access a high-quality early childhood experience, arriving at school with a healthy body, healthy mind, and the foundational knowledge and skills needed to succeed; and that every family has access to the resources needed to be effective as their child's first and most important teacher and advocate. A child's access to quality ECE experiences and the positive outcomes that result will not be contingent on income, race, zip code, disability status, nor English language proficiency. This vision and mission has guided the development of the strategic planning goals and actions, policies, and investments to benefit all of Maryland's families and communities.

Table 2.2 Maryland B-5 Strategic Plan Goals Overview

A. Strengthening Availability and Access	GOAL A1: Build access for all families across a mixed delivery system.
	GOAL A2: Support parent choice by fostering a robust and qualified statewide family child care provider market.
	GOAL A3: Increase the availability of programs and services.
	GOAL A4: Ensure that families of children with special needs' concerns are addressed.
	GOAL A5: Enhance the capacity to meet Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health needs.
	GOAL A6: Increase the coordination between early childhood and health services.
	GOAL A7: Promote two-generation initiatives.
	GOAL A8: Reduce administrative hurdles for families in accessing ECE programs.
B. Improving and Supporting Program Quality	GOAL B1: Enhance the statewide focus on equity.
	GOAL B2: Reduce statewide gaps in kindergarten readiness.
	GOAL B3: Increase the number of highly qualified early childhood staff.
	GOAL B4: Improve and increase staff preparation, professional development programs and compensation.
	GOAL B5: Strengthen equity, coordination, and alignment in PD System.
	GOAL B6: Improve program quality and expand implementation of Maryland EXCELS.
C. Deepening Family Engagement	GOAL C1: Continue the investment in statewide Family Engagement framework.
	GOAL C2: Improve family engagement and leadership.
D. Building System Infrastructure and Coordination	GOAL D1: Increase integration of early childhood services among state and local agencies.
	GOAL D2: Improve coordination among agencies responsible for services for young children and families.
	GOAL D3: Continue to leverage the state and local governance infrastructure through local ECAC and LECAC's.
	GOAL D4: Conduct a statewide facilities study and apply findings to targeted improvement strategies.
E. Ensuring Successful Transition Experiences	GOAL E1: Ensure successful transition for young children between early care and learning settings, and into kindergarten and the early grades.
	GOAL E2: Strengthen family engagement in preparing for transition between ECE settings and into Kindergarten and elementary school.
	GOAL E3: Incorporate transition planning in professional development and training opportunities.
F. Modernizing and Maximizing Data Systems	GOAL F1: Improve data system modernization to support more effective communication with parents and the public, as well as better customer service.
	GOAL F2: Improve, integrate and coordinate Maryland's early childhood data collection.
	GOAL F3: Develop a unified application for social services and programs.
	GOAL F4: Institute a statewide unique child identifier that will allow for longitudinal data.
G. Leveraging Resources and Funding	GOAL G1: Strengthen sustainability and target investments where they are most needed and most effective.
	GOAL G2: Increase public awareness of funding available and decrease administrative barriers for families.
	GOAL G3: Streamline funding sources and mechanisms to increase funding efficiencies.

The logic model for the Renewal Grant has been significantly revised from the Initial Grant to intentionally focus on improving state, local, provider, and educator capacities, as well as to include the provision of direct services for vulnerable families with infant and toddlers. The logic model articulates a theory of change where Renewal Grant activities support capacity building at four levels: State, Community, Provider, and Educator. The increased capacity at all levels are mutually reinforcing and support the ultimate outcome of stable families, child well-being, and school readiness (see page 54). Adding representatives and advisory bodies to the governance structure is discussed in the *Meaningful Governance Section*.

Maryland views the ongoing development and implementation of the statewide ECE system plan as a reflection of stages and processes that have been defined by implementation science.² In this approach, implementation is not an event but rather an iterative and reflective process that moves through four stages: Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation. This application will reference these implementation stages in presenting a summary of Initial Grant activities and proposed activities under the Renewal Grant.

Initial Grant, Activity 1: All NA activities are completed or on schedule to be completed within the Initial Grant timelines. The NA, including the implications of what the state learned about its ECE system, were discussed under *Activity 1*. The Higher Education Meeting was completed and informed the Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory, conducted in partnership with the Center for Study of Child Care Employment. To date, 66% of higher education programs in the state have responded and agreed to participate and the surveys are in the final review phase before being released to participants. The state anticipates the release of a series of reports in February 2020 with findings and recommendations.

² Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., and Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida.

Initial Grant, Activity 2: *Activity 2* was the development of the state SP. The status of this project has been discussed in the body of this section and will be fully completed as an Initial Grant activity by January 2020.

Initial Grant, Activity 3: Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge included seven activities. All activities are on schedule to be completed within Initial Grant timelines and will be discussed regarding their continuation throughout the sections of this Renewal Grant proposal. (1) Maryland EXCELS [the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)] and Accreditation were leveraged to support increasing quality training available to providers in order to support their participation in the QRIS. The number of providers entering Maryland EXCELS increased by 10% over the year and 44 additional providers reached the highest rating of Level 5. (2) WIDA Early Years focused on promoting culturally and linguistically sensitive ECE settings and implemented the WIDA Early Years via several project activities, including making online training modules available, hosting two training institutes, and convening stakeholders at a Statewide Kickoff. Maryland also attended the WIDA national conference in October 2020 to discuss key implementation projects, including the development of an early identification tool for young multi-language learners. (3) Monthly equity trainings were provided to the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) leadership in partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC), which the state proposes scaling in years 2-4 of the Renewal Grant to reach additional MSDE staff and stakeholders. (4) Maryland Public Television (MPT) developed two public service announcement spots that will air on the statewide public television channel to promote family engagement in their children's ECE and choices that lead to licensed, high-quality child care. (5) The fifth activity successfully supported the implementation of the National Pyramid Model by 38 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) consultants at 11 programs throughout 4 jurisdictions

throughout the state who served 523 children. Given the NA and SP focus on IECMH, this Renewal Grant proposes an expansion of this successful initiative by increasing the number of licensed IECMH consultants based on data that show licensure correlates with stronger results among child and program outcomes. (6) As a national leader in early childhood family engagement, Maryland continued to support the implementation of the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework and toolkit, and hosted a statewide Family Engagement Summit that was attended by approximately 300 stakeholders and keynoted by Drs. Rosemarie Allen and Walter Gilliam. (7) *Strengthening Families* Parent Cafés and Media Literacy Learning Parties were implemented in partnership with Maryland Family Network (MFN) and Ready at Five, respectively. To date, 30 individuals have participated in *Strengthening Families* Parent Café Facilitator training, and ten parent cafes were held with 96 parents participating. Four Media Use Learning Parties are scheduled to be hosted prior to the end of the initial grant implementation period. In December 2019, as the culmination of the design and dissemination of the Developmental Milestones and Resource Calendars activity, the state will distribute approximately 20,000 Developmental Milestones and Resource Calendar kits to ECE health professionals throughout the state to provide to new parents. This calendar provides critical information and resource links across agencies to support parents of young children beginning at birth. Finally, ECE Data System Development, a substantial component of this activity, is discussed in great depth in *Activity 6* of this Renewal Grant proposal.

Initial Grant, Activity 4: Sharing Best Practices among State ECE Providers included five activities. All of these activities are on schedule to be completed within initial grant timeline, and all of these activities will be discussed in depth throughout the sections of this Renewal Grant

proposal due to their proposed continuation for years 2-4, with the exception of the Kennedy Krieger intervention study project.

(1) The implementation of Children Study their World (CSW) curriculum is included for continuation in this proposed Renewal Grant based on its success in the initial grant year. The project-based inquiry curriculum, which uses teacher tablets and parent apps, was implemented in 189 Pre-K classrooms, child care center classrooms and family child care homes this fall throughout the state of Maryland. CSW was provided to 20 special educators who are supporting children with Individual Education Plans in CSW classrooms. (2) The Kennedy Krieger early intervention project involved the development of a survey of providers to inventory and explore the evidence-based intervention models applied across home and center-based settings. ECE stakeholders and leadership have identified a series of research-based intervention models they would like to implement in place of this exploratory activity. (3) Grants were also awarded to the state's 24 LECACs to support quality improvement initiatives identified by each local jurisdiction based on their assessed needs. LECACs opted to target gaps including IECMH service awareness and training, as well as partnerships with pediatricians and local health providers to elevate awareness of ECE prevention and early intervention resources. This approach was successful in engaging local leaders in targeting identified needs and is replicated and expanded in the state's Renewal Grant proposal. All but two LECACs took part in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Results Count* training, which represented a critical opportunity for assessing needs based on data and developing strategies that informed the focus of local quality grants. (4) The pilot of LENA Grow, an innovative, research-based early intervention initiative to support teacher-child and parent-child verbal interactions, was well-received in three Family Support Centers (FSC) throughout the state. This project, which involves real-time data reporting and analysis through

infant and child recording devices, targets improving staff and parent understanding of high-quality serve and return verbal interactions. Initial reactions of staff and center leaders indicate it is a well-received model and should be expanded. (5) Finally, The University of Maryland (UM) School of Social Work, in partnership with MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) promoted and supported inclusive settings through PD for child care providers in four jurisdictions. PD was focused on developmentally appropriate practices, universally designed instruction, formative assessment, evidence-based, social-emotional interventions – all paired with ongoing reflective coaching provided by trained coaches.

Initial Grant, Activity 5: Improving Overall Quality of ECE Programs/Providers/Services, included one activity, Library Grants. This activity, which reaches children in FCC settings and after-school programs, as well as those being cared for in their homes, will be completed within the initial grant year. Parents and providers want to see this program expanded in the subsequent years.

4. Aligning Comprehensive Services

Maryland has worked to establish an integrated governance and program administration infrastructure that supports alignment and coordination across comprehensive programs and services that address the full range of school readiness and developmental domains. Maryland's state and local coordinating bodies serve as an important part of the state's mixed-delivery system by promoting coordination, collaboration, efficiency, and quality enhancement across the state. The state ECAC is a thirty-four-member council, chaired by Dr. Karen B. Salmon, State Superintendent of Schools, and is comprised of representatives from the state's child-serving agencies, General Assembly, provider community, philanthropic organizations, advocacy groups, training and technical assistance providers, school districts, associations, and other stakeholder

groups. The state ECAC coordinates efforts among ECE programs, conducts NAs, and develops a statewide strategic report regarding ECE programs. Under this Renewal Grant, the state proposes surveying stakeholders for suggestions for additional participants of the state ECAC, and adding key stakeholders, including representatives from the Maryland State Department of Transportation, Maryland Chamber of Commerce, and the military community.

LECACs are a critical component in the state's Renewal Grant proposed funding strategy. Based on the work accomplished under the Initial Grant with *Results Count*, as described above, in years 2-4, the state plans to continue to engage the Annie E. Casey Foundation in this work and promote LECAC engagement in supporting statewide priorities through increased grants. In addition, MSDE, MDH, and DHS partner in a number of cross-sector and interagency coordinating and governance bodies, including the Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC), the Home Visiting Coalition, the Family Engagement Coalition, WIDA Early Years Steering Committee, and the Pritzker Children's Initiative planning grant Leadership Committee.

Within MSDE, there is a strong effort underway to ensure increased coordination between early childhood and Pre-K-12 programs, services, and systems. Representatives of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title programs meet regularly to review and discuss coordination and alignment. In addition, district-level ESSA plans are reviewed to ensure that early childhood has been incorporated into the identified strategies and approaches.

Several direct service programs also undergird Maryland's focus on coordination and alignment, including Judy Center Early Learning Hubs (Judy Centers), FSCs, and Child Care Resource Centers (CCRCs). Across the state, there are currently 54 Judy Centers located in Title I school zones that act as a vehicle for local collaboration and coordination. Judy Centers are charged with coordinating prekindergarten through the early grades; early intervention and

preschool special education; private center-based and FCC homes; and family support services to deliver a wide spectrum of ECE and family support services. Under this Renewal Grant proposal, the state will leverage the reach and scope of Judy Centers by requiring LECACs to strengthen their coordination with Judy Centers in developing their local service plans. Maryland also has a network of 25 FSCs that provide free, comprehensive services to families, targeting parents and their children from birth through age three. Funded through private-public partnerships, every community in Maryland is served by one of 12 regional CCRCs. These centers make up the Maryland Child Care Resource Network (MCCRN), which provides leadership and services designed to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of child care in communities across the state. Under this Renewal Grant, the state proposes leveraging the established infrastructure of the FSCs to continue to scale the LENA Grow Project, and target supports to teen parents. Finally, MSDE's Office of Child Care Regional Offices provide a two-generation approach to managing coordinated service provision and connecting families to needed resources that support the children's school readiness, healthy growth, and development.

5. Spending Money Differently and Engaging New Funding Streams

Maryland's statewide SP includes goals and strategic actions that suggest implementing new spending approaches and engaging new funding streams. For example, SP Goal G1 is focused on strengthening the sustainability of and alignment among funding streams, and targeting investments where they are most needed and most effective. This goal will be executed through several strategic actions, including leveraging state dollars with core federal funding streams, including CCDF, Early Head Start/Head Start, Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships, Maternal Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and focusing spending on interventions to improve equity and quality in

geographic areas and programs with high concentrations of vulnerable children. The state will also direct investments toward evidence-based models and programs with proven effectiveness, including FSCs and Judy Centers.

SP Goal G2 is focused on increasing public awareness of funding available to parents, and decreasing administrative barriers so that more families and children can access financial help to use ECE services. Several strategic actions will support this goal, including ensuring MSDE Regional Child Care Offices, FSCs, and Judy Centers are family centered and designed to connect families with needed programs, services, and resources. The state also plans to continue to reduce the cost of ECE programs for all families—including middle-class families—through increased child care provider reimbursement rates, expanding child care tax credits, and expanding free, voluntary universal Pre-K for all three year-olds from families at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and a sliding scale for families at higher income levels.

Maryland has generous philanthropic partners who collaborate closely with the state and local jurisdictions on ECE projects. These include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Krieger Foundation, and the Abell Foundation, among others. Maryland is currently also participating in both the Pritzker Children's Initiative planning grant and National Governor's Association (NGA) Prenatal to Age 3 (PN3) Policy Academy, one of only two states to participate in both state consortia.

Finally, this Renewal Grant application includes the addition of new funding investments, such as supporting two new provider advocacy coalitions, including the Latino Family Child Care State Association, to promote both leadership and equity within the statewide early childhood marketplace. In addition, some approaches and investments from the Initial Grant have been discontinued based on the NA findings and decisions to approach priority areas in new ways based

on changing needs. One example of this is the investment in the Maryland EXCELS training initiative. Due in large part to Initial Grant funding, the number of providers participating in Maryland EXCELS increased by approximately 10% over the initial grant year. Based on this success and the findings of the NA which documented hurdles providers face in moving up the rating system once they are participating, the state proposes to use Renewal Grant funding to support quality improvement among providers by increasing the number of Quality Assurance Specialists (QAS) by three staff, or 20%. The role of QAS is to provide direct, targeted, and differentiated support to programs to help them reach higher levels in Maryland EXCELS.

Activity 3: Maximizing Parental Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement

1. Informing Families, Connecting Families to Resources, and Empowering Choice

Maryland's Initial Grant outlined a framework for maximizing parental choice, knowledge, and engagement—particularly for vulnerable families. The framework had four components: 1) Increasing the number of high-quality ECE programs; 2) Improving the state's QRIS to more accurately measure, incentivize, and improve quality; 3) Creating better methods of culturally and linguistically appropriate communication about programs, services, and supports that highlight the importance of choosing high-quality ECE and promote more responsive and engaged parenting; and 4) Increasing financial supports to families to offset the cost of care so they can better afford the high-quality option they prefer for their child. The NA and SP process, summarized by the state's goals in **Table 2.2**, validated the importance of this framework and allowed MSDE and its partner agencies to hear first-hand from families of their struggles and successes with access, quality, communication, and cost.

The state has empowered family choice through the implementation of the Initial Grant activities and will build upon these activities with Renewal Grant funding. Most notably, the work conducted

under the Initial Grant leverages recent increases in CCDF funds to create higher eligibility thresholds for the child care scholarship (subsidy) program – from 33% of State Median Income (SMI) to 65% of SMI – and increase the reimbursement rate to ECE providers to promote quality and better offset the high cost of care. Provider reimbursement rates increased from the 9th percentile of the market rate survey in 2018 to the 30th percentile in 2019. Rates will increase to the 60th percentile next year. These increases, in addition to the activities of the Initial Grant and activities proposed under the Renewal Grant (discussed below), have and will continue to empower family choice. Today, 20,000 children are accessing the child care scholarships from the subsidy program compared to 13,000 in 2018. These initiatives support Maryland’s ultimate goal of the grant outlined in the logic model—children arriving at kindergarten with the educational and social-emotional foundation needed for success during their school years and in life.

2. New Two-Generation Approaches that Focus on Family Well-Being

The most powerful conversations during the NA and SP process involved the need for stronger two-generation approaches. “School readiness doesn’t have a whole lot of meaning to families when they are struggling for survival,” was one of a number of quotes that inspired a goal in the SP focused on two-generation initiatives. Over the past year, the state has focused on new strategies related to two-generation approaches that support a family’s well-being with the goal of improving child outcomes. Currently, MSDE supports a network of 24 FSCs that are the foundation of the state’s two-generation initiatives, targeting parents with children from birth through age three with free, comprehensive services to families. As part of a new two-generation initiative, MSDE will supplement the work of the FSCs by scaling up the LENA Grow initiative (**Project 3.1**), an evidence-based model that focuses on increasing interactive talk between both

caregivers and parents and young children, and supporting language development in five additional FSCs throughout the state.

In addition, the NA findings highlighted the need for additional supports for teen parents, and as such, the state will be expanding the FSC network to include teen parenting programs that allow the parent to attend school while providing ECE **(Project 3.2)**. Parents spend time in the ECE center learning parenting skills, spending time with their babies, and receiving coaching in positive interactions while attending classes to earn their high school diploma. Funding for this project will be leveraged with funding provided by the CCDF Infant-Toddler Set-Aside.

3. Ensuring Parents with Developmental Concerns Are Informed About/Connected to Resources

The Initial Grant has allowed MSDE to expand its partnerships to better support parents who have concerns about their children's development or have a child with a diagnosed disability/developmental delay. Within MSDE, DEC collaborates with the DEI/SES to ensure that families who have concerns are connected to EI or ECSE. DEI/SES has a statewide B-5 comprehensive system of coordinated services for children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. DEI/SES, in partnership with Local Infants and Toddlers Programs (LITP), local school system ECSE services, the Maryland School for the Blind, and the Maryland School for the Deaf, conducts public awareness activities (i.e., Child Find) on the availability of and access to EI and ECSE for: 1) Families of young children; 2) Physicians and pediatricians; 3) Publicly funded prekindergarten programs; 4) Family and center-based child care providers; and 5) Other private early care and education programs that may be unique to a jurisdiction. Also, in the Initial Grant year, the MITP launched an online referral tool that allows parents, family members, and other community referral sources to easily begin the referral process. As ECE providers increase the use of developmental screenings, the online referral will offer an additional

mechanism for access to early intervention services and opportunities for collaboration to support families.

Equally important, the NA revealed the lack of inclusive ECE settings across the state. Findings from a report on access revealed that 72% of children with a disability or delay could not access an ECE arrangement. In response, University of Maryland (UM) will expand their training across four additional districts in evidence-based peer-to-peer reflective coaching practices, and provide professional development for ECE providers in universally designed instruction for inclusive settings, formative assessment, and evidence-based social-emotional interventions paired with ongoing reflective coaching provided by trained coaches **(Project 3.3)**.

Over the initial grant year, MSDE partnered with Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council to develop a toolkit for providers and families. The toolkit includes information on how providers can request additional funding from the state to offer inclusive settings for children receiving a child care scholarship and who are part of the EI/ECSE program. The toolkit also includes information for parents to inform providers that they can receive additional funding to support their child's learning in an inclusive child care setting.

4. Partnering to Ensure that Parents Are Informed About and Connected to Other Needed Services

MSDE created the public education website, *Marylandchild.org*, which is a one-stop clearinghouse for parents that is funded with CCDF dollars and designed to meet the requirements of the 2014 CCDBG Act. All parents, including those with children with a disability and families with English as a second language (there are no tribes in Maryland) can use the site to find child care, register for prekindergarten, and apply for the child care scholarship program. Multilingual families can also access *LOCATE: Child Care*, as described below, to access assistance in multiple languages through a translator. As a result of the collaborative work MSDE has done with its

agency partners as part of the initial grant, the agency is working to build out the “Finding Services” tab of the consumer education website. This tab will provide a gateway to information on and applications for a host of services. Over the course of the renewal grant period, MSDE will work with MDH and DHS, as well as other agencies, to ensure information and links to critical support services can be accessed through the Finding Services tab. MSDE has also created partnerships with a number of other state agencies, including MDH and DHS, to support a data systems integration project, described in depth in *Activity 6*, that will ensure parents are informed and connected to other services as needed using a universal eligibility form.

5. Improving Availability and Usability of Information for Families

MPT has been a key partner in the state’s efforts to improve the availability and usability of information for families. Under the initial grant, MPT developed two public service announcements that address findings from the NA that indicated that parents’ choices tend to prioritize cost and location, even if it means choosing unregulated care. The first announcement emphasizes the benefits of providing high-quality ECE experiences to children and encourages parents to choose programs with high quality ratings on Maryland EXCELS. The second announcement outlines the perils and potential health and safety implications of using unregulated ECE providers, and guides parents to look for licensing verification. As part of the renewal grant, MSDE will develop and launch a comprehensive communications plan in partnership with MPT that address other NA findings while building out a broader communications plan that also includes streaming content, inclusion in mainstream media outlets, texting, and other modes of communication (**Project 3.4**).

In addition to these broad messaging strategies, MSDE is conducting more targeted strategies, specifically for new parents. The initial funding supported hospital outreach kits to provide

information on ECE and other support services to families giving birth at all hospitals in Maryland. The kits include an 18-month child development calendar and information on selecting quality ECE, applying for a child care subsidy, Maryland EXCELS, health care, WIC, Medicaid, immunizations, and information on comprehensive family and child programs and services. With the renewal grant, the distribution of the kits will be expanded to reach families in other locations **(Project 3.5)** and provided in multiple languages to ensure they are accessible to all families across the state. This statewide approach to ECE information dissemination will ensure that the families of vulnerable children receive information about accessing important ECE supports and other information starting at the birth of their child or even prior during prenatal care.

6. Expanding the State's Coordinated Referral System

Every community in Maryland is served by one of twelve regional CCRCs. An important component of the CCRC system is *LOCATE: Child Care*, a free referral service using a trained referral specialist that helps parents identify care based on the needs of the child and parental preferences and in multiple languages as needed. The service also helps families to find inclusive programs. Parents access the service through the phone, webpage, or a smartphone app. Another opportunity to promote more efficient access funded by this Renewal Grant is enhancing the referral and data tracking software Judy Centers will use to link families and their children to needed services and programs. This activity, funded as part of the larger data modernization effort discussed in *Activity Six*, will enable staff to be more efficient in their role, and provide a foundation for future data integration opportunities with Judy Centers in order to gain a complete picture of the programs and services young children access prior to school entry **(part of Project 6.1)**.

7. Improving Family Engagement and Leadership, Including Peer-To-Peer Networks

A national leader in early childhood family engagement, Maryland has used the past year to build out an infrastructure to support stronger communication between MSDE and families. This work included enhancing the functionality of the MARYAND FAMILIES ENGAGE website that houses the state family engagement framework and toolkit. In partnership with the Center for Technology in Education at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a two-way communication feature was added to the website, which allows families, early childhood teachers, and others interested in family engagement to submit resources, articles, and events to share that are vetted by MSDE and then posted to the website.

During the Initial Grant, the state hosted a Family Engagement Summit with nearly 300 participants. MSDE partnered with the MFN to bring parents from its leadership network to the Summit. Parents then presented on their experience at the Summit to the Maryland Family Engagement Coalition, how they used the information presented, and ways in which the Summit and other state communication strategies could better meet their needs. Renewal Grant funds will be used to replicate this successful strategy in the first (**Project 3.6**) and second years of funding; LECACs will host local Family Engagement Summits in the third year.

As discussed in *Section 2*, the Initial Grant funded two initiatives that focus specifically on parent leadership, advocacy, networking, and improving parenting skills—Parent Cafés (**Project 3.7**) and Parent Learning Parties (**Project 3.8**), which are designed to support parents/family members as they take an active role in their child’s education and in schools, ECE programs, and local communities. The state proposes to continue these strategies under the Renewal Grant. Finally, in response to the NA, the state will partner with effective fatherhood engagement initiatives, including Port Discovery Children’s Museum Fatherhood Initiative, to involve fathers of young children in their early care and learning (**Project 3.9**).

Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices and PD for the ECE Workforce

1. Developing/Expanding Evidence-Based Practices into PD for ECE Providers

Over the past year, Maryland has continued to coordinate and expand its ECE PD system and technical assistance (TA) infrastructure to better incorporate evidenced-based practices. Stakeholders made it clear during the NA process that the state’s trainings were not organized or scaffolded sufficiently to help providers progress towards a deeper understanding of content or skill acquisition, do not adequately cover critical content areas, and often do not count toward a credential or degree. In response, a goal area in the SP addresses strengthening equity, coordination, and alignment of the state’s PD system. Through the Renewal Grant, the state will expand efforts to increase collaboration and efficiency of PD services with an emphasis on key content areas most requested by stakeholders and critical to improvement of outcomes for children—infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH); ACEs, attachment, and trauma-informed approaches; cultural and linguistically appropriate practices, and inclusion practices for children with disabilities.

To guide the state, Renewal Grant funding will be used to update the *Maryland Knowledge and Competency Framework for Child and Youth Care Professionals* (**Project 4.1**) based on work conducted by the Early Childhood Workforce Committee and findings from the Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory funded by the Initial Grant. Originally developed as part of the state’s RTT-ELC grant, the framework outlines the expectations for what ECE educators—including providers of after-school programs—should know and be able to do across core knowledge areas and provides a pathway to competency development from “novice” to “advanced.” The framework will be revised to address trauma-informed care approaches, attachment, ACEs, cultural competencies/linguistically appropriate practices, inclusion, and transformational coaching. To

support a more aligned PD system, the state’s credentials, certifications, and higher education coursework will be assessed to determine alignment to the revised competencies within the updated framework.

Through the Renewal Grant, MSDE will also work to coordinate and enhance PD offerings to support the state’s ECE workforce in promoting social-emotional development, addressing challenging behaviors, and supporting IECMH. The NA uncovered “a fragmented, disconnected, and under-resourced” set of IECMH supports for ECE providers and professionals, leading to a goal area to enhance the state’s capacity to meet IECMH needs. During the Initial Grant year, Maryland conducted an IECMH gap analysis and developed recommendations to enhance and coordinate the current IECMH system of PD supports. The state will use Renewal Grant funding to implement key recommendations from the gap analysis, including: the development of a comprehensive statewide IECMH framework (**Project 4.2**) that supports better coordination and alignment of IECMH services and systems. This framework will provide Maryland with common definitions and shared language across agencies on IECMH, a set of common goals, offer specific strategies, and identify best practice models/programs across the state; and increase the number of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (**Project 4.3**) that can provide Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid Model coaching and implement the Facilitation Attuned Interactions (FAN) two-generation approach.

2. Improving the Training and Experience of Providers

As part of the NA and SP processes, stakeholders expressed a strong need for more practice-based coaching models where providers are offered the opportunity to implement strategies and reflect as they improve their practices. Renewal funding will be spent on expanding inquiry-based coaching and resources for the *Children Study Their World* (CSW) and *Children Experience Their*

World (CEW) curricula (**Project 4.4**). The CSW curriculum for 4-year-olds and CSW PD resources were developed by the Center for Early Childhood Education and Intervention at the UM in coordination with MSDE staff. The curriculum and materials are available free of charge via an iTunesU course app to all licensed child care programs and public Pre-K teachers throughout Maryland. The resources are accessible to providers and teachers from their phones, tablets, or personal computers. Funding from the Renewal Grant will support the development of a comprehensive infrastructure to support and sustain the implementation of the CSW curriculum coaching statewide, and the development and implementation of the CEW curriculum in 250 3-year-old classrooms. This best practice approach includes PD and curriculum coaches for teachers, additional supports for FCC providers, and a free app for parents and caregivers that supports home-program connections and family engagement.

In addition, the Renewal Grant will fund a capacity-building train-the-trainers program to train cohorts of professionals to support multi-language learners through the WIDA Early Years program (**Project 4.5**). WIDA Early Years is an evidence-based program focused specifically on the language development of young multilingual children in ECE settings. Along with building local capacity in supporting multilingual children and families, this partnership also provides support for strategic statewide planning and the rollout of WIDA Early Years tools and resources, including online training modules. Maryland has joined a cohort of seven states also implementing WIDA Early Years and will continue to lead the collaboration of an early identification tool pilot for multi-language learners developed with Initial Grant year funding, and available for adoption by other states participating in WIDA Early Years.

3. Addressing ECE Workforce Turnover

The NA emphasized that highly trained ECE professionals are the most important aspect of quality in an ECE setting. Yet, recruiting and retaining qualified an ECE workforce is extremely difficult. Workforce turnover is a critical problem in the state, as it creates massive inefficiencies in the PD system as providers are trained and then leave the profession for jobs in other sectors. Three drivers of the turnover issue were identified in the NA/SP process: 1) A lack of respect for the profession; 2) The absence of a clear career path for ECE workers; and, 3) Poor compensation and benefits. Maryland's SP addresses each of these three drivers of workforce turnover.

A critical workforce turnover issue identified is the dramatic decrease in the number of FCC providers in the state. FCC providers are critical to the state's mixed delivery system as a prime source of care for infants and toddlers. Using CCDF funding, MSDE currently offers \$500 startup grants for individuals to become FCC providers to offset the costs of becoming licensed. Stakeholder feedback indicated that this funding does not cover the cost of startup and fails to act as an incentive to increasing and retaining the supply. Accordingly, Renewal Grant funding will be used to significantly increase the start-up and continuation grants to support FCC providers, which will help increase the availability of quality providers, particularly in rural areas of the state, and provide them with additional resources to keep them in the profession (**Project 4.6**).

In addition, MSDE will work with the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA) and NAFCC to do a statewide FCC capacity study to better understand and address the declining numbers of FCC providers (**Project 4.7**). This project will also be part of the updated NA and help the state more efficiently use Renewal Grant and CCDF dollars to support FCC providers. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Maryland will continue to increase the child care subsidy provider reimbursement rates, as well as the Maryland EXCELS Tiered Reimbursement rates, to support provider retention.

4. Developing Aligned Credentials/Certifications/Coursework

A key strategy to substantively aligning credentials, certifications, and coursework will be through the revision of the educator competency framework. To align and house information on the credentials, certifications, and coursework of providers, Renewal Grant funding will be used for an ECE data system modernization project (**See Activity Six**) that will include developing an online PD Registry. The registry will ensure providers and directors have access to see qualifications of staff. The state is also aligning its career lattice efforts with the work being conducted by the state to align its Pre-K to grade 12 career path. For ECE educators, the lattice will be transformed from unconnected PD units to complete the 90 and 120 required hours to a system that begins with a Child Development Associate (CDA) and builds to an Associate's Degree and then to a Bachelor of Arts/Science. This provides for a pathway for ECE educators to higher compensation and participation in the Maryland's mixed-delivery Pre-K program.

5. Increasing the Availability of Qualified Providers, Especially in Rural Areas

As an official state partner, Maryland will work with the Council of Professional Recognition to support ECE educators to update expired CDAs and increase the number of teachers receiving CDAs (**Project 4.8**). The state has been promoting the Council's amnesty program, which begins in January 2020. The project covers the costs of both renewal and new credentials, helping to fill the demand for qualified assistant teachers in Maryland's Pre-K program and aligning with the statewide career lattice. In addition, the state will work in partnership with stakeholders to explore the design of an online BA program for ECE professionals in order to engage rural providers in distance learning opportunities (**Project 4.9**).

6. Sharing Best Practices/PD for Infants and Toddlers Around Meaningful Inclusion

As discussed in *Activity Three*, the state has a network of 24 FSCs that provide comprehensive services to families with children younger than three. These FSCs will be used to provide training on *Zero to Three's* Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators. A train-the-trainer model was implemented in the Initial Year for the state's certified trainers, who committed to providing at least one training. In the Renewal Grant, training would be provided across the state and in multiple sectors in addition to the FSC, including Early Head Start and the three Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships (**Project 4.10**). This builds on and aligns with the work described in **Project 3.3**.

7. Providing Interdisciplinary Professional Development

This Renewal Grant will support several opportunities for interdisciplinary PD. In addition to ongoing statewide training opportunities like the Family Engagement Summit and Early Learning Summit, this project will support the implementation of the Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (**Project 4.11**), and new partnerships with the Maryland Family Child Care Alliance (**Project 4.12**) and the Latino Child Care Association (**Project 4.13**) to increase participation, leadership, and engagement and ongoing collaboration among diverse stakeholders. In addition, MSDE will partner with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortia (MAEC) to implement an equity-focused train-the-trainers model, as well as align MSDE contracts with new state birth through grade 12 equity regulations and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) new equity policy (**Project 4.14**).

As discussed in *Activity 3*, MSDE is revising its MOU with DHS. In fact, the state's data system integration to the MD THINK platform (discussed in *Activity Six*) has MSDE revising its agreements with many of its partner agencies. Sharing and interpreting data from diverse

disciplines will require significant cross training. Renewal Grant funding will be used to conduct cross-training for MSDE, DHS, and MDH staff.

In addition, Renewal Grant funding will be used to leverage the popularity of the state's annual family engagement summit and school readiness symposium to include tracks for state agency staff to receive training on each other's systems and connect with local stakeholders. Funding will also be used to support equity training across the three agencies. The LECAC grants discussed in *Activity 5* will include a requirement for participation at the cross-system training that builds on the *Results Count* training in the initial grant year. This training will also be provided for leaders at partner state agencies.

8. Supporting Transitions

The NA highlighted significant coordination and transition issues between early childhood programs, and between early childhood programs and schools. Addressing these issues are important goals of the SP. To bridge this divide, Renewal Grant funding will be used to leverage the work done with the state's 24 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in developing MOUs with local Head Start programs, and other early childhood programs as feasible, to support coordination and smooth transitions both between ECE programs, and to the public schools. MSDE will provide a guidance memo, technical assistance toolkit, and training around these MOUs, and work to highlight best practices. This strategy will include a focus on meeting the needs of diverse children and families, including multi-lingual learners and children with special needs.

Sharing best practices and providing professional opportunities to build the capacity of ECE directors and school leaders is critical to Maryland's vision. The proposed joint leadership academy will support ECE leaders—in both ECE programs and schools—to effectively promote the learning and development of the children they serve and aid in the seamless transition across

systems. The state will promote job-embedded, sustained, and ongoing professional learning experiences to acquire the practical skills necessary to address children's academic, social-emotional, and physical needs.

Activity Five: Improving the Overall Quality of Programs and Services

Maryland will utilize both subgrant options to address the highest-priority areas identified through the NA and SP. The subgrants given directly to local programs will focus on supporting two-generation models that: 1) Strengthen and stabilize families, including families experiencing homelessness and in rural areas, and provide family supports to address, or even prevent, ACEs; and 2) Provide services targeted for infants and toddlers to promote positive cognitive, social/emotional, and health outcomes. These subgrants address a gap in the state's efforts to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children for success in school by providing intensive targeted services directly to the state's most vulnerable children and families. Previous sections of the application have outlined current and planned efforts to increase access to high-quality ECE programs. To complement these efforts, recipients of the subgrants will work directly with families and their young children to prevent exposure to ACEs and support their role in promoting healthy development. The objective of these grants is to address conditions that affect family instability, including ACEs, coordinate with the state's social service programs, and give child care providers the tools they need to work with infants and toddlers who demonstrate behavioral issues resulting from ACEs.

The second set of subgrants (see Section Two below) will indirectly improve quality by improving services and coordinating at the local level. The subgrants will provide funding to Maryland's local ECE coordinating bodies, as well as libraries for initiatives aligned to the SP and

that address the most important needs of each community. Both subgrant options are discussed in more detail below.

1. Awarding Subgrants Directly to Local Infant and Toddler Programs in Target Communities Across the State

As part of the Renewal Grant, Maryland will provide \$2 million in competitive grants (**Project 5.1**) directly to eligible organizations (e.g., hospitals, county governments, local health departments, or other eligible entities) to implement one of five models that provide direct services to infants and toddlers within vulnerable or disadvantaged families, including those experiencing homelessness, with a priority on serving low-income and disadvantaged children living in rural areas. Total funding for this project will be \$2 million based on \$500,000 in Renewal Grant funds leveraged with \$1.5 million in the state's Infants and Toddlers CCDF set-aside funding.

Specific need for program or service: As discussed above, there is a critical need for programs that provide direct services to children and families to support family stability and prevent ACEs. During the NA and SP processes, stakeholders discussed this as an overwhelming need, one that is incorporated in no less than four goal areas in the state's SP. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will include criteria and scoring rules that will heavily weight plans to work in communities demonstrating the highest need and strategies to address children living in rural areas within the state.

Justify proposed project period and number of subawards: The project length of the subawards will be three years. The competition will ensure that the subgrants are awarded to the highest need areas of the state, which will require the entire three years of implementation to make a significant and sustainable impact. The state anticipates awarding five grants. The per-child cost for

implementation will vary by program (see Activities section below) and the number of children served will range from 1,000 to 3,500 per year depending on the implementation model.

SMART objectives: The objective of the subgrants is to support areas of the state that demonstrate large percentages of children with ACEs, and focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable infants and toddlers and their families. The RFP process will require process measures and outcomes related to the implementation of the models and will be scored using the SMART framework.

Major activities of initiative: Applicants may request funding for one of four models through the subgrant. These two-generation models are evidence-based, address the needs of families with infant and toddlers, and can be implemented with success in rural areas. These models are:

HealthySteps: An innovative evidence-based pediatric primary care program committed to healthy early childhood development and effective parenting. A *HealthySteps* Specialist (HSS) is embedded into a family's pediatric team to promote positive parenting and healthy development for infants and toddlers.

Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch Up (ABC) Program: An evidence-based parenting intervention for caregivers of infants and toddlers who have experienced early adversity. Parent coaches provide guidance to parents to help them nurture and respond positively to their children.

Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P): A parent-reflection program implemented by home visitors, counselors, and other professionals to support secure parent-child interactions and healthy options.

Family Connects Maryland: An innovative home visiting program designed to connect with mothers to enhance maternal skills and self-efficacy; assess each family's unique strengths and needs; and to connect the family with needed community services such as health care, child care, and financial and social support in order to promote family functioning and child well-being.

Supplement not supplant: The RFP process will require applicants to provide assurances that they will not supplant funds.

Comprehensive and target outcomes for low-income and disadvantaged children: The RFP will require the applicant to describe the vulnerable or disadvantaged populations that will be served, and the scoring will be weighted to ensure that applicants proposing to serve these populations receive priority. In addition, the RFP will prioritize applications that address the needs of children living in rural areas and children experiencing homelessness.

2. Subgrants for Activities that Indirectly Improve the Quality of Local Programs

A second set of subgrants will provide funding to LECACs (**Project 5.2a**) and local library systems for services that meet the specific needs of the community (**Project 5.2b**).

Specific Need/Plan: A key finding of the NA was the dramatic variation in the needs of children and families across the Maryland's counties. The needs of families within Baltimore City are different than those of the western rural counties, which are different than those of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Accordingly, building on a successful model in the Initial Grant, Maryland will subgrant funding to LECACs and libraries to target one or more specific priorities (discussed below) using new evidence-based two-generational models or scaling existing successful local programs and/or approaches.

Proposed project length and number of subawards: Grants will be awarded to all 24 LECACs and local library systems based on their three-year plans and number vulnerable children in the community. The LECACs are comprised of diverse leaders in the community across health, education, and social services. The subgrantees will leverage these connections to coordinate the implementation of the stated priorities. Local library systems reach families who may not have access to ECE programs, as well as FCC providers seeking resources to improve the quality of

their services. Given that these are local systems building grants, the funding has the potential to impact 100,000 to 150,000 children across the state.

SMART Objectives and Deliverables: The grant funding to the LECACs and libraries must be used for one of the following purposes aligned with the SP: 1) Implementing or scaling Infant/Toddler program support and intervention models; 2) Implementing or scaling IECMH options for children, their families, and providers; 3) Expanding medically fragile care options for children and their families; 4) Leveraging MSDE's investments in children with disabilities with local initiatives, including increasing the number of Inclusion Specialists and programs able to serve children with special needs in inclusive settings; 4) Expanding Judy Centers services to additional parents, including families experiencing homelessness. This could include providing transportation, increasing staff, or ensuring additional parents are engaged; 5) Implementing or scaling family engagement strategies or models; 6) Implementing or scaling strategies or approaches that support successful transitions between early learning programs, or between early learning programs and kindergarten and the early grades; 7) Implementing or scaling partnerships with community programs such as Port Discovery Children's Museum; Young Audiences of Maryland's Baby ArtsPlay; and other partners; 8) Supporting local approaches to unified application or enrollment protocol development; and 9) Developing local transition plans in coordination with school leaders, early childhood leaders, community partners, and parents.

Assess how state will assess proposed activities: This subgrant process will be incorporated into the PPEP. Subgrantees will also have to submit quarterly reports documenting implementation. These reports will allow the state to determine whether they are meeting the desired outcomes.

Activity Six: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Use of Continuous Improvement

Data Integration, Management, and Data Use

1. Progress and Status of Developing an Integrated Data System (Status: Planning Process)

Maryland's Initial Grant application discussed the major challenges with the state's ECE data system—the Child Care Assistance Tracking System (CCATS). This system handles important functions for MSDE's DEC, including storing the records and inspections for over 8,000 ECE centers and FCC providers, determining funding levels for the child care scholarships and provider payments, storing data from Maryland EXCELS, recording the professional qualifications of the ECE workforce, and serving as a repository for approved trainings and coursework. The aging data system is not cloud-based and built on a custom data platform that limits the state's ability to adapt to new federal regulations and address evolving data needs.

Maryland's goals for a more coordinated and collaborative set of ECE programs and services rely on a comprehensive, integrated, agile, and cloud-based data system. When completed, MSDE's data system modernization/integration efforts will support more effective communication with parents and the public, better customer service, improved data accuracy and quality, data sharing and alignment of records within MSDE and across agencies, increased efficiency, and expanded reporting capabilities. Data system modernization/integration is also essential for assigning a unique identifier for children before they enter school; designing a unified application that would allow a family to apply and be determined eligible for multiple services across state agencies at one time; and executing true data-driven decision making at the state level. Funding from the Initial Grant allowed the state to take significant steps toward modernizing the CCATs data system which will allow the system to be fully integrated into an Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) as discussed below.

The ultimate goal of the MSDE's data modernization is to migrate and integrate the CCATS system to the *Maryland Total Human-services Integrated Network* (MD THINK), a large federal

investment spearheaded by MDH. MD THINK is a data integration project involving DHS, MDH, as well as the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. The system will allow multiple state agencies to share and manage data from one system and will enhance the customer experience by eliminating redundancies and reducing operational costs.

MSDE has prepared the foundational components for the data system modernization through the Initial Grant. MSDE has examined the data needs of stakeholders and data systems in other states, including the Pennsylvania Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN), and is conducting a Technical Gap Review to assess the current technical architecture and code against the data needs of MSDE stakeholders. This work will culminate in a Roadmap Recommendations Report that will clearly outline the steps necessary for the integrated data system, including recommended modules/source code, resources necessary to complete the work, and the timing and level of effort for the tasks required for modernization and integration.

Through the work conducted in the Initial Grant year, MSDE has decided to utilize the PELICAN data infrastructure as the foundation of its modernized data system. PELICAN has been adopted and adapted successfully by other states. Building upon an existing data system creates significant efficiencies and cost-savings by not requiring the creation of core system elements. The renewal funding will be used to develop “modules”—self-contained blocks of code that include the information and the “logic” for how it is to be used—that builds off of the foundational PELICAN infrastructure. These modules will support the different ECE programs (licensing, eligibility, subsidy, reporting, etc.). **Project 6.1** will take the next step in the state’s data modernization by creating these modules for MSDE’s specific program operation and reporting needs. Creating the new data system using the module approach and Application Program

Interfacing will allow for a much more flexible and responsive system when updates to Maryland law require changes to the system. The new ECDS will also leverage (and ultimately connect to) MD THINK by using shared modules involving security, communication, and other data functions common across child and family support programs in MSDE, DHS, and MDH.

2. Inclusion of Specific Data Elements (Status: Planning Process)

The current CCATS system houses information on state child care licensing, Maryland EXCELS, the subsidy program, and teacher credentialing. These data elements can be linked through the current system, and connected to TANF data in DHS. MSDE intends, and is currently working on, integrating the wealth of data from Head Start by interfacing with Head Start child management systems as part of the pilot to assign unique identifiers (discussed below). This pilot will also allow for the link to the Pre-K through 12 system. It is envisioned that MSDE will also link data elements associated with IDEA, State PreK, Primary K-3, home visiting, TANF, Medicaid, Child Welfare, WIC, and other programs run by MSDE, DHS, and MDH. This will occur through integration with the MD THINK system, where most of these data already resides.

4. Collecting Community Data (Status: Already Operational)

Maryland's LECACs and Judy Centers are charged with collecting data at the community level through a local NA, and must also analyze Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) data for their locality. As part of a local continuous quality improvement process, each LECAC must establish annual benchmarks of school readiness for children and coordinate early childhood initiatives and reforms to meet those benchmarks. To support this process, the state provided *Results Count* Leadership Institutes in October 2019, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for the LECACs to support collaborative, results-based, and data-driven decision making with an equity lens.

5. Assessing Data Literacy of Key Stakeholders (Status: Planning Progress)

Data literacy and the technological capacity of ECE stakeholders are two major concerns of the state. As part of the NA, stakeholders discussed the limited technological capacity of the increasing number of grandparents and great-grandparents who are raising young children and the need for “human-touch” services and outreach to families. With the understanding that data is only as good as the way it is collected and utilized, the MSDE DEC is in the process of developing an ECE technology plan funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Ten years ago, MSDE published the *Maryland Education Technology Plan for the New Millennium* which focused on technology and data literacy issues among the state’s public schools. The ECE Technology Plan will assess and support data literacy among ECE providers, trainers, coaches, and quality specialists who are part of the Maryland’s professional development network, as well as state administrators. The plan will be completed in February of 2020.

As the CCATs system is modernized and ultimately integrated into MD THINK, it will be important that MSDE staff are trained on the new reporting functionality of the system and how best to use the data to support program improvement and service delivery. Part of **Project 6.2** focuses on data literacy training for MSDE staff to support the effective use of data and to support EXCELS quality coaches in using EXCELS program data to support quality improvement.

6. Data Governance

MD THINK has supported a statewide data governance structure for data integration that is led by Subi Muniasmay, the Chief Technology Officer of DHS. The MD THINK steering committee consists of the highest-ranking technology officers in the Governor’s Office, the MD Department of Budget, DHS, DOH, and the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Currently, MSDE has MOUs related to data sharing with MDH and DHS that are being

revised. These MOUs address privacy, confidentiality, and security including who has access to what types of data and the form in which the data can be accessed (e.g., de-identified). Moreover, the MD THINK platform has rigorous protections in place for data security and privacy.

7. Assigning Unique identifiers and Conducting an Unduplicated Count (Status: Envisioned/Piloting)

Maryland has a system for assigning a unique identifier as children enter the Pre-K-12 school system. The state's vision for a unique identifier for its ECE system is to utilize the state's Pre-K-12 State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) system to assign a unique identifier when a child enrolls in an ECE program or service. The method will ultimately allow an unduplicated count of children participating in ECE programs to understand the patterns of service and allow MSDE to track each individual child's progress through the ECE system and into Pre-K-12.

DEC has created an Early Childhood Portal that will be piloted in January of 2020. The Portal was designed to be interoperable with the different systems (COPA, ChildPlus) and data already in the programs' current systems. The Portal captures data elements that are used in the school system when enrolling students. In January, three Head Start programs and the state's community-based Pre-K Expansion Grant programs will participate in the pilot along with a pilot group of child care providers who are receiving reimbursements through the child care subsidy program. Students will receive a unique identifier in CCATS. Staff will work with the Student Accountability Office to assign a SASID. MSDE has been developing additional fields in the Portal to collect other early childhood programs and services in CCATS, and this will be matched with the SASID. After the year-long pilot, the state will provide the opportunity for additional children in the child care subsidy program to be enrolled through the Portal and assigned a SASID

prior to entering school. Over the next two years, the state will scale up the program to include all children in the child care subsidy program, as well as non-participating children.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

1. Tools and Methods to Promote Accountability

In Fiscal Year 2020, Maryland began funding Local School Systems (LLS) for four year-olds served in full-day Pre-K programs the previous year through the Pre-K Supplemental Grants. In the same year, the state began sustaining the funding for the Pre-K Expansion Grants, which are awarded to local school systems, community-based providers, and Head Start programs. With three funding sources, the challenge is to ensure that funds are not being used for duplicative services. The improvements made in the data system and instituting of unique identifiers will help to address this. In addition, the improved data system will enhance the transparency of metrics, and monitor the progress towards achieving goals for the state and discrete communities. The ability to generate reports with disaggregated data by race, income, language ability, disability status, gender, geographic locations, and other criteria to better address inequities will be critical. The deployment of the state MD THINK platform across agencies allows for interoperable systems and the sharing of data to address the multiple needs of families and children, and then holds state agencies accountable for delivering those supports.

2. Describe Areas of Fragmentation and Overlap

ECE programs across the state receive monitoring and technical assistance visits from multiple agencies and branches. For example, the licensing branch at MSDE annually inspects child care programs. Programs participating in Maryland EXCELS are also visited. If the ECE program is receiving funding for Pre-K, they are monitored two times per year. Often, staff do not coordinate their findings. One way we are reducing fragmentation and duplication is to cross-train DEC staff

in multiple grants so that they can monitor for all regulations and criteria across programs. MSDE will work with DHS and MDH to consider the implementation of coordinated differential and unduplicated monitoring strategies.

Families will benefit the most from efforts to reduce fragmentation and duplication. The engagement of MSDE in the MD THINK collaborative will allow for the development of a single eligibility form for parents seeking child care, IECMH, WIC, SNAP, Housing stability supports, health care, and other family and child supports. The burden for families being required to submit documents multiple times will be eliminated and the need for state staff to provide duplicative review will cease. In addition, as the state begins to expand universal Pre-K, efficiencies can be gained by using existing income verification and payment systems rather than creating new, duplicative systems that are prevented from sharing information.

3. Approach and Timeline to Update, Enhance, Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPEP)

Purpose, audience, and expected evolution: There are three overarching goals/purposes to Maryland's PPEP: 1) To ensure that MSDE is a good steward of federal funding by tracking how funds are spent; 2) To understand whether the funded activities achieved the anticipated outcomes; and 3) To support a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. The PPEP is intended for all ECE stakeholders in the state ranging from the Governor and ECAC to the providers and parents. With the SP nearly finalized, MSDE will form a technical working group to support and advise the PPEP process, further refine the indicators, inventory data sources to measure the indicators, create new data collection methods, and begin implementation.

Alignment with SP: Renewal Grant activities are aligned specifically to the goals of the SP, which stem from the NA findings. As outlined in **Table 6.1**, the PPEP will evaluate the implementation and impact of these using a number of specific metrics including: 1) Financial measures: MSDE's

grants management system will be used to track how the funding is spent and whether subcontractors are meeting their milestones with quality deliverables that are on time and within their budgets. Funding allocated, clear grantee SOW/reporting requirements, procurement procedures/accounting policies followed, compliance monitoring; 2) Process measures: MSDE will measure whether the activities proposed are implemented with fidelity; and 3) Outcome measures: MSDE will measure the impact of the activity on the target population, provider, or agency.

Key Personnel: Dr. Steve Sheldon, Assistant Director and Associate Professor at JHU's School of Education is leading the PPEP. Dr. Sheldon will be supported by Charlie Mitchel and Ken Blackman at MSDE.

Identifies New/Potential Data Sources: MSDE and its implementing partners have data systems in place that can capture a number of the process and outcome measures. MSDE's CCATs system can capture increased participation in the child care subsidy system; whether new providers received published ratings in Maryland EXCELS; and whether participating providers move up one or more quality levels. Contractors and grantees have systems to track their technical assistance offerings, which are important process measures. For the other indicators, MSDE will work with the evaluation team to identify how best to measure the key indicators, identify new data sources, and analyze the relevant data.

Approach and Methods: **Table 6.1** provides an initial list of process and outcomes metrics that will be analyzed using appropriate methodological techniques. These metrics will support continuous quality improvement.

How findings will be leveraged: Findings from the PPEP will be summarized in an annual report that will be presented to the ECAC as well as agency heads, the legislature, and Governor's office

to inform policies and funding decisions. The findings will also be shared with stakeholders and parents to inform them of the state's progress in supporting vulnerable children and families.

4. Periodically Updating and Aligning the PPEP

At the outset of the Renewal Grant period, the PPEP will be analyzed and revised to ensure that the indicators align with the most current NA and SP. The indicators in **Table 6.1** will be examined to ensure they are the most appropriate indicators to measure the activities, and will be revised periodically in order to be responsive to revisions to the NA and SP.

5. How this Award Will Build on Progress from the Initial Grant Activities

Within this Renewal Grant, funding is spent differently as a result of what was learned in the Initial Grant. This is described in detail in *Activity Two* and throughout the application. For example, projects like LENA Grow and WIDA Early Years will be expanded under this grant.

4. Refining the Logic Model and Activity Priorities

As discussed above, the NA is driving a set of Renewal Grant activities that work to increase state, local, provider, and educator capacity to better serve families and children. Throughout the Renewal Grant period, state and local data will be analyzed to get an indication of which activities are working, which need to be refined, and which need to be replaced with more effective interventions. These outcome measures are directly aligned with Maryland's vision and logic model. When Maryland's vision is ultimately achieved, all elements of the system (state, localities, programs and educators) will have increased capacity to better serve families and children. Programs will be equipped to deliver equitable, trauma-informed, two-generation evidenced-based practices (provider capacity); stronger system coordination would ensure all vulnerable children

Table 6.1: Performance Indicators by Project

Task Description	Potential Process Measure	Potential Outcome Measure
Project 1.1 Needs Assessment	Successful implementation of updated NA process	Published NA document
Project 1.2. Facilities Study	Successful implementation of study	Status of facilities by locality
Project 2.1. Strategic Plan	Successful implementation of updated SP process	Published SP
Project 3.1. LENA Grow	Fidelity to model # of classrooms implementing	Increase in # words heard and conversational turns
Project 3.2. Teen Parenting child care model	Fidelity to model Five additional ECE sites funded	Increase in graduation rates of teen parents in the program
Project 3.3. Promote and support inclusive settings	-Successful partnerships with UM School of Social Work and MSDE's Department of SE/EI	Increase in number of setting with inclusive practices
Project 3.4 PDG B-5 communications strategy	# of spots created and aired # of text messages shared	Increase in parent awareness of programs
Project 3.5. Hospital Kits	Inclusion of DEC materials in hospital bags	# of bags and kits distributed
Project 3.6. FE Summit	# of participants at the Summit	+ Summit evaluations
Project 3.7. Parent Cafes	Fidelity to evidence-based model # of parent cafes and attendance	Parent attitude change based on evaluation survey
Project 3.8. Learning Parties	Fidelity to model Implemented in 6 jurisdictions	Parent attitude change based on evaluation survey
Project 3.9. Fatherhood Engagement	Successful partnership with Port Discovery Children's Museum Fatherhood Initiative	# of dads engaged # of events hosted
Project 4.1. Competency Framework	Ongoing input and feedback from ECE professionals	Updated Framework
Project 4.2. IECMH Framework	Ongoing input and feedback from ECE professionals	Completed Framework
Project 4.3. CSEFL Pyramid Model/FAN two-gen approach	Fidelity to evidence-based model Six additional IECMH consultants hired	Provide IECMH services to 15% more kids
Project 4.4. CSW and CEW curricula.	CSW/CEW module with PD implemented in in 200 ECE settings	+ # of teachers implementing/ utilizing curriculum/ resources
Project 4.5. WIDA Early Years	+ in programs and professionals accessing Early Years Resources	+ change in provider staff attitudes/practices
Project 4.6. Startup bonuses to support FCC providers.	+ number of FCCs accessing start-up bonuses	+ availability of quality FCC providers + in rural areas

Project 4.7. FCC capacity study	Effective partnership with the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance and NAFCC	+ understanding/strategies to address the declining FCC.
Project 4.8. Council of Professional Recognition	+ number of FCCs accessing start-up bonuses	+ the availability of quality FCC providers, + rural areas
Project 4.9. ZTT Critical Competencies for IT Educators	Coordinate with FSCs that provide comprehensive services to families with children younger than three	# of ECE professionals trained
4.10. Explore online BA	Partner with stakeholders to assess needs and opportunities	Completed implementation plan
Project 4.11. Leadership Program	Effective partnerships with ECE leaders	# of participants
Project 4.12. Partner with the Maryland FCC Alliance	Effective partnership with the Maryland Family Child Care Alliance	Increase participation, leadership, and engagement
Project 4.13. Partner with the Latino Child Care Association	Effective partnership with the Latino Child Care Association	Increase participation, leadership, and engagement
Project 4.14. Promote equity strategies	Implement a TOT Equity Training/align MSDE contracts with state equity regulations and NAEYC	+ staff trained. Aligned MSDE contracts
Project 5.1a. Infant Toddler Models (Subgrants)	Fidelity to evidence-based model	Outcomes will be determined based on each model
Project 5.1b. Quality Assurance Specialist	Recruiting qualified QAS	+QAS by 20%; Increase # moving up EXELS ratings
Project 5.2a. LECAC Best Practices (Subgrants)	Creation of high-quality LECAC plans targeting state and local priorities	Scaled implementation of 2-generation EB models
Project 5.2b. Library Grants	Creation of high-quality plan based on state and local priorities	Enrichment of children in informal ECE settings or home
Project 6.1. Modernize/Integrate data system/unique ID pilot	Successful implementation of Data Modernization activities	N/A
Project 6.2. PPEP	Successful Implementation of PPEP	Data-driven decision making
Bonus Project 1. Leadership Academy Bonus Project 1)	Creation of professional development for principals and ECE directors	# of effective ECE-K transition practices disseminated
Bonus Project 2. <i>Attendance Study</i>	Successful partnerships with Attendance Works and UM	Understanding/develop strategies to + attendance

would be in the highest level of quality ECE programs as measured by Maryland EXCELS (state capacity supporting providing capacity); all MSDE staff would be exemplars of culturally and linguistically sensitive practices (state capacity); all infant and toddler classrooms would have rich talk environments (educator capacity); every ECE classroom would be an inclusive setting (provider capacity); and every parent would have the knowledge and information to be their child's first and best teacher and be able to make informed choices about their child's ECE (family outcome).

5. Addressing Potential Obstacles for Implementing the Program Performance Evaluation

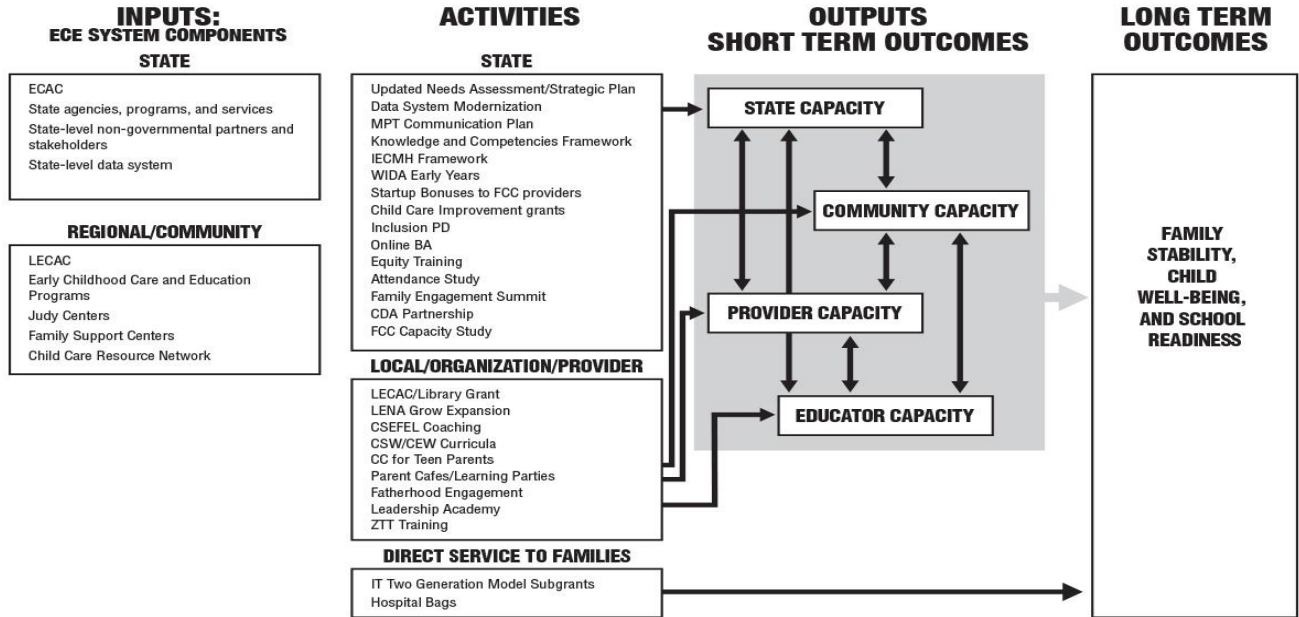
Implementation of the activities identified in the program performance evaluation will be challenging given the wide range of partners and stakeholders involved in the proposed activities. After outcomes from each grant activity are clearly articulated, we anticipate time will be required to work across partners and stakeholders in order to successfully finalize metrics to measure the activities, establish data collection processes for the metrics, complete data collection and analysis, and refine the logic model and quality activities as part of the research process. To overcome these obstacles, MSDE will leverage joint decision making bodies that already engage partners and stakeholders, including the ECAC, LECACs, as well as other joint committees and advisory boards. This will allow MSDE to ensure successful implementation of the program performance evaluation plan.

Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

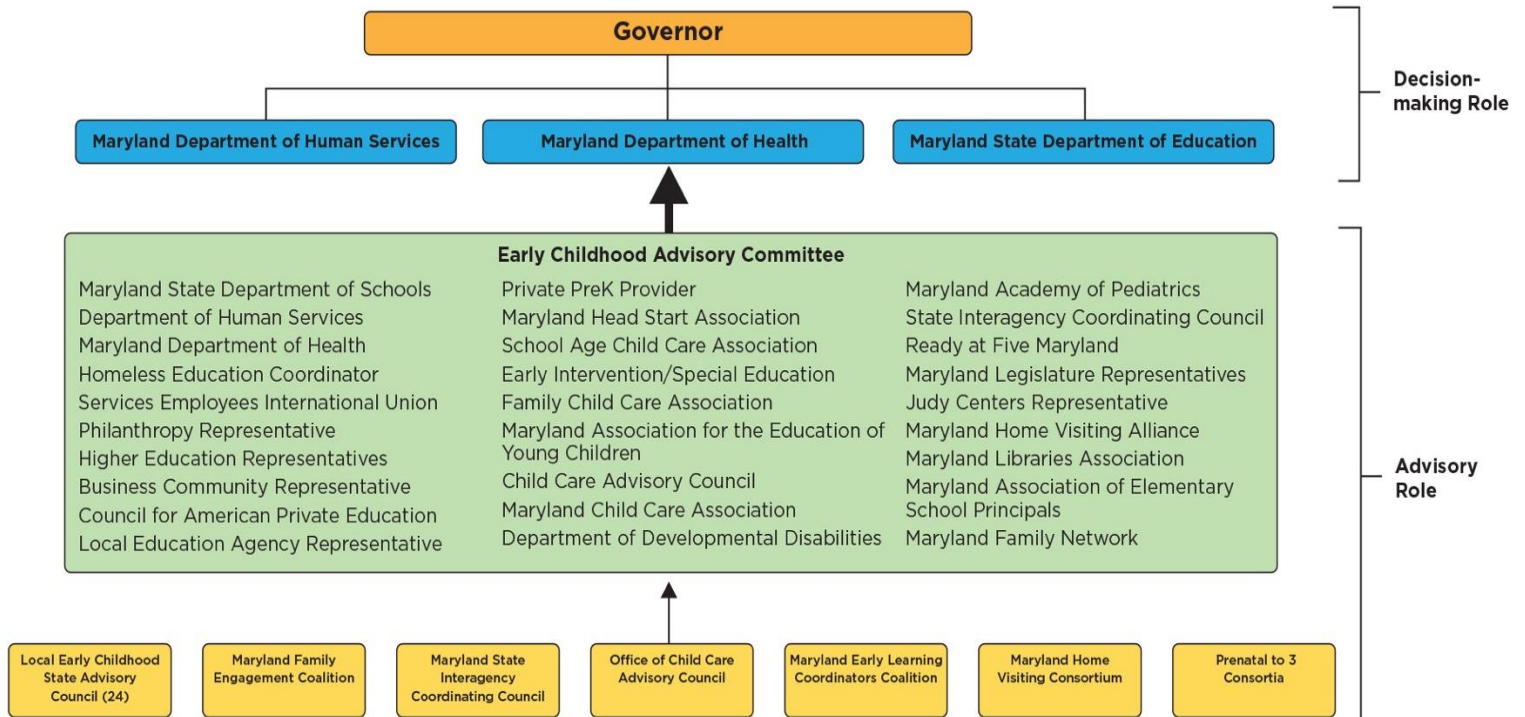
1-2. Description of Governance Structure and Map of Decision Making

Nearly all of Maryland's ECE programs reside in one of three agencies—MSDE, DHS, and MDH. The state has consolidated a number of ECE programs under DEC in MSDE which is responsible for child care licensing and Maryland EXCELS; the child care subsidy program (CCDF); the state's Pre-K program and Preschool Expansion Grant; the credentialing of early

MARYLAND PDG B-5 LOGIC MODEL



Maryland Early Childhood Services Decision-making Path



childhood professionals; and the state's workforce and PD/training system. DEC also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, oversees the early childhood data system, and funds the MCCRN, Judy Centers, FSCs, early childhood mental health consultant network, and a number of other smaller early childhood initiatives. IDEA Parts C and B, Section 619 programs, are housed with MSDE but administered by DEI/SES.

MDH is responsible for the MIECHV programs as well as the state's other programs that support child and family health and wellness including Medicaid, WIC, Title V Maternal and Child Health Programs, behavioral health programs, and public health programs. DHS administers the state's programs that promote family stability and economic well-being including Temporary Cash Assistance, SNAP, Temporary Disability Insurance, and Heating and Energy Assistance programs.

As outlined in the decision making map below, Governor Hogan is the ultimate decision maker and sets the strategic direction for ECE policies and program for the state agencies. The individual agencies have decision making authority over their programs and each serves an advisory role to the other through the ECAC, along with the other major state agencies, organizations, and associations. In addition to the ECAC, a number of other committees support the decision making process in an advisory role representing important perspectives within the state, including children with special needs, the child care community, LECACs, Home Visiting, and the Prenatal to Three Consortium. The major changes to the governance structure resulting from the Initial Grant include the addition of stakeholders in an advisory role. Maryland will include representatives from the military, Department of Transportation, and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce to the ECAC, and the Prenatal to Three Consortium has become a new advisory body this year.

3. System Stakeholders Supporting PDG B-5 Renewal Activities

Representatives from every program and service within the Maryland ECE system were in some way engaged in the assessment, planning, and implementation of the grant activities. Starting from the NA Town Hall meetings hosted by MSDE, MDH, and DHS to the most recent update on the Initial Grant for the ECAC, the state came together. **Table 6.2** highlights the names of key stakeholders and their role. Roles are defined by the following key: *H: Health; BH: Behavioral Health; N: Nutrition; IS: Income Support; HE: Higher Education; EI: Early Intervention; VP: Vulnerable Populations; MD: Mixed Delivery; and TA: Technical Assistance*. Bolded names in the table indicate a new stakeholder that will be involved in the process moving forward.

Project Timeline and Milestones

Table TM.1 below provides a breakdown of yearly milestones that will be accomplished as part of the grant. The NA and SP milestones are include in their respective sections of the application.

Organizational Capacity and Management

MSDE will continue to administer the funding and manage the required grant activities (See Governor Hogan’s letter in File 2). MSDE has a track record of strong federal grant implementation, having successfully managed an RTT-ELC grant, PDG, and initial PDG B-5 grant. MSDE has exceptional organizational capacity and a seasoned management, data, and research team.

MSDE’s Divisions work collaboratively across ECE programs and services with programs funded through the ESSA and other federal- and state-funded programs (See Organizational Chart in File 2). In addition, MSDE serves as the lead on the ECAC, which as discussed above, includes MDH, DHS, as well as other ECE stakeholders from across the state.

Table 6.2 Key Stakeholders Who Have and Will Be Involved in Assessment, Planning, and Implementation of All Activities

Name	Organization	Role	Name	Organization	Role
Ashton-Thomas, Valerie	Homeless Ed/Neglected Delinquent/At-Risk Programs MSDE	VP	LaCasse, Mary	MDH	H/ BH/N
Barksdale, Crystal	Family Child Care Provider	MD	Lightfoot, Kim	DHS	IS
Basterra, Maria Del Rosario (Charo)	MAEC	VP	London, Rachel	Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council	EI
Bridger, Terry	Prince George's Community C.	HE	Mancilla, Lorena	WIDA Early Years	VP
Callanan, Meredith	T. Rowe Price Foundation	MD	Mellen, Robin	The Wilkes School	MD
Candelera, Margo	UM School of Social Work	BH/EI	Mellott, Diana	CEO, Play Centers, Inc.	MD
Tirrell-Corbin, Christy	Center for ECE and Intervention, UM	EI	Miller, Carole Elizabeth	Judy Center, Queen Anne's County	MD
Davis, Lisa	Howard County PS System	MD	Muhammad, Charlene M.	Community Action Agency, Montgomery County	TA
Franczkowski, Marcella	SE/EI, MSDE	EI	Nizer, Jennifer	OCC, MSDE	MD
Gaafar, Meena	MD State FCC Association	MD/TA	Peusch, Christina	MD State CC Association	MD/TA
Gee, Flora	Maryland AEYC	MD/TA	Krista Respass	Maryland Public Television	MD
Hall, Elizabeth	Interagency Steering Cmte. for Managing for Results	TA	Rosenberg, Samuel I.	Maryland General Assembly	MD
Hanna, Tresa	HS Collaboration Office	MS	Salmon, Karen, Ph.D	State Superintendent, MSDE	MD
Hannon, Steve	LENA Grow	TA	Stoltz, Dorothy	Carroll County Library	MD
Hicks, Steven	Assistant State Superintendent, MSDE	MD	Twilley, Curtis	Beaver Run Elementary School	MD
Hoephner, Loretta	MD, Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics	H	Walker, Diane D.	Department of Minority Health and Health Disparities Administration	H/VP
Hussey-Gardner, Brenda	UM School of Medicine	H	Weeldreyer, Laura	Maryland Family Network (MFN)	TA
Hyde, Keri	Ready at Five	MD/TA	Williamson, Carol	Assist. State Superintendent, MSDE	MD
King, Nancy J.	Maryland General Assembly	MD	Worthy, D'Lisa	UM, School of Medicine	BH

Nearly all of the activities proposed under the grant will be the ultimate responsibility of MSDE, MHD, and the DHS participating in a strong collaborative partnership. MSDE staff have experience doing similar cross-agency work and will be successful in implementing the Renewal Grant activities. The RTT-ELC, PDG, and PDG B-5 were of similar scope and size to what is proposed in this grant application and a number of key staff who worked on the other grants will oversee the activities proposed here. Key staff on the project include:

Steven R. Hicks, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood: Prior to his appointment, Mr. Hicks served as Senior Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Education.

Dr. Rachel Demma, Director of State Systems Development and PDG B-5 Project Manager. Ms. Demma has over 15 years of experience working in early childhood at the federal, state and local level for entities including ACF and NGA.

Jennifer Nizer, Office of Child Care Director, DEC: Ms. Nizer has over 31 years in the ECE field including as a teacher and director of early childhood programs.

Cynthia La Marca Lessner, Collaboration and Program Improvement Branch Chief, DEC: Ms. La Marca Lessner supported the implementation of the state's RTT-ELC grant and has over fourteen years of experience working with Head Start.

Judith Walker, Early Learning Branch Chief, DEC: Ms. Walker has 41 years of educational experience including teaching kindergarten and as an elementary principal.

DEC also has the organizational capacity and staffing to implement the data system modernization project. This major activity under the grant will be led by **Jim McMahan, PMP, CSM, MBA, Esq.**, who is project manager for the development and operation of CCATS and the portal. Mr. McMahan will be assisted by **Ms. Amber Green**. Ms. Green brings an exhaustive

Table TM.1: Timeline and Milestones by Project (Activities 3-6 and Bonus Points)

Activity	Project	2020	2021	2022
Activity 3: Parental Choice and Knowledge	Project 3.1	Implement for 40 families	Implement for 60 families	Implement for 60 families
	Project 3.2	Serve up to 6-9 infants	Serve up to 6-9 infants	Serve up to 6-9 infants
	Project 3.3	Train 50 ECE teachers	Train an additional 75	Train an additional 100
	Project 3.4	Develop communication plan	Implement 50% of plan	Implement 100% of plan
	Project 3.5	Distribute 20,000 kits	Distribute 25,000 kits	Distribute 30,000 kits
	Project 3.6	Hold Family Summit	Hold Family Summit	Hold 20-24 local Summits
	Project 3.7	Parent Cafes for 50 participants	Parent Cafes for 50 participants	Parent Cafes for 50 participants
	Project 3.8	LP for 45 participants	LP for 45 participants	LP for 45 participants
	Project 3.9	Implement for 20 participants	Implement for 40 participants	Implement for 60 participants
Activity 4: Best Practice	Project 4.1	Form working group and plan	Complete up 50% of document	100% of document/disseminate
	Project 4.2	Form working group and plan	Complete 50% of framework	100% framework/disseminate
	Project 4.3	Serve 50 families	Serve 100 additional families	Serve 150 additional families
	Project 4.4	Train 75 on CSW; develop CEW	Train 75 on CSW/ 50 on CEW	Train 75 on CSW/ 250 on CEW
	Project 4.5	Implement phase II of TOT	Train 200 ECE educators	Train 300 ECE educators
	Project 4.7	Plan for capacity study	Implement study methods	Dist. findings/recommendations
	Project 4.8	Enroll 50 ECE teachers	100 additional ECE teachers	150 additional ECE teachers
	Project 4.9	Train 100 ECE IT teachers	150 additional ECE IT teachers	200 additional ECE IT teachers
	Project 4.10	Form design workgroup /plan	Develop 25-50% of courses	Develop 50-100% of courses
	Project 4.11	Begin first cohort of 20	Begin second cohort of 20	Begin third cohort of 20
	Project 4.12	Enroll 25 members	Enroll 50 additional members	Enroll 100 additional members
	Project 4.13	Enroll 20 members	Enroll 40 additional members	Enroll 60 additional members
	Project 4.14	Train 100 state/local staff	Train 125 state/local staff	Train 150 state/local staff
	Project 5.1	Serve 1,000 families/children	Serve 1,000 families/children	Serve 1,000 families/children
Activity 5: Subgrants	Project 5.2a	Serve 2,000 families/children	Serve 2,500 families/children	Serve 3,000 families/children
	Project 5.2b	Serve 1,000 families/children	Serve 1,000 families/children	Serve 1,000 families/children
Activity 6: Data for CQI	Project 6.1	Complete fit gap analysis/plan	Create 1-2 individual modules	Create 1-2 individual modules
	Project 6.2	Plan for evaluation	Collect and analyzing data	Dist. findings recommendations
Bonus Points	Project Bonus 1	Develop LA training/pilot	Train 100 ECE administrators	Train 125 ECE administrators
	Project Bonus 2	Train Judy staff /develop MOUs	Train additional/ analyze data	Dist. findings/recommendations

understanding of CCATS, having experience with the system since for 15 years the creation and development of proposed system flows and navigational processes.

DEC also has the fiscal, administrative, and performance management capacity to effectively administer the grant funds. It has a Fiscal Management Unit that has successfully managed multiple federal grants. The unit is managed by **Donna Pennewill, Fiscal Management Unit Director at DEC**, who has over 21 years of experience administering grants in compliance with federal and state requirements.

The research and data unit is headed by **Dr. Charlie Mitchell**. Dr. Mitchell specializes in early childhood development and policy with an emphasis on quantitative and computational methods. Assisting Dr. Mitchell is **Kenneth Blackman**, a research statistician trained at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

In addition to these DEC key staff members, Mr. Hicks will collaborate closely with his counterpart at DEI/SES, **Marcella Franczkowski, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services**. Ms. Franczkowski's career spans more than three decades and is responsible for the provision of statewide programmatic and fiscal leadership for Maryland's early intervention and special education and related services.

Finally, as noted, Dr. Steve Sheldon, assistant director of the Center for School, Family and Community Partnerships will manage the PPEP.

Program Performance Evaluation Plan

Information on the PPEP can be found under *Activity Six* above.

Logic Model

The Logic Model can be found on page 55 and is discussed under *Activities 2 and 6*.

Project Sustainability Plan

Maryland has a long history of sustaining innovative practices and effective services after Federal or private investments end. For example, RTT-ELC funds were used to create or expand local ECACs and Judy Centers. Though the grant period ended, local ECACs and the Hubs continue to thrive with local, state, and private funding. In fact, last year, Judy Centers amassed over one million dollars in private and local funding to expand their work in improving the quality of birth through age 5 programs and services. In the past legislative session, a bill passed and was signed into law that sustains funding for Maryland's original PDG award in Fiscal Year 2020 and thereafter. RTT-ELC also funded the development of Maryland's comprehensive assessment system, including the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and the Early Learning Assessment. After funding ended, Maryland continued to fund the data system, technical assistance, and tools to sustain the system. In short, when there is evidence that early childhood interventions work, their funding is sustained by the state.

MSDE has a plan for sustaining the PDG B-5 grant investments. The grant's biggest project—the modernization of the ECE data system—will be maintained by the current staff and funding in place to maintain the existing system. Quality grants to the ECACs will require grantees to build stronger community collaborations and create a plan to sustain their initiatives after the grant period. MSDE has a strong technical assistance network with dedicated staff to support these entities in accomplishing and sustaining their goals. To that end, Maryland is partnering with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to implement *Results Count* to help local leadership achieve and sustain positive, measurable outcomes for children and families.

WIDA Early Years includes a capacity-building Train-the-Trainers program and online modules, Promising Practice Implementation Kits, and other resources that be used as supports for families and educators after the grant has ended. The CSW/CEW curricula, professional

development resources, and teacher and family apps will be available at no charge to any Maryland teacher after the grant period. This grant opportunity will build capacity of MSDE staff, educators and parents for high-impact, culturally responsive family engagement through increased awareness, knowledge, and skills. Finally, there will be a lasting increased capacity of local communities to co-construct, with families, policies and practices which focus on creating partnerships between families, schools, and communities to improve student outcomes.

Dissemination Plan

MSDE and its agency partners have a robust communications infrastructure that disseminates information to key stakeholder and target audiences across the state. MSDE has three communication specialists—one each for the Maryland EXCELS program, family engagement initiatives, and DEC. MSDE has a number of specific communication vehicles, including newsletters, press releases, the MSDE website, Marylandchild.org consumer website, and MarylandFamilies.org. In addition, multiple technical assistance vehicles (e.g., local ECACs, Early Learning Coordinators, Judy Centers, as well as the MCCRN) allow for comprehensive and timely dissemination of reports and products from the grant project to key target audiences. In addition, the state will leverage its partnership with the MPT free texting service to disseminate information on smartphones to parents and stakeholders. The goals of the dissemination will provide information that promotes coordination and the other outcomes aligned with Maryland’s vision. The state will use pre-existing communication metrics (website hits), newsletter emails opened, etc., to assess the effectiveness of its communication strategies.

Third-Party Agreements

There are no third-party agreements as part of the grant. As outlined in the *Mixed Delivery Section*, MSDE has a coordinated governance structure with administrative responsibility over the programs that are the focus of the grant. This structure obviates the need for such agreements, and

MSDE will provide the entire required state match. As noted previously, MSDE will continue its close collaboration with other state agencies and stakeholders.

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds

Fiscal monitors and grant managers collaborate to ensure that grant activities comply with applicable grant statutes and requirements. These concerted practices include reviewing applications, budgets, and proposals; preparing invoice templates based on approved budgets to track categorical expenditures; sampling supporting documentation during site visits as well as when reviewing invoices for payment; and reviewing fiscal activity reports on a monthly basis. All expenditure reimbursements require the review and approval of both fiscal and program staff to ensure that expenditures are in accordance with the grant assurances outlined on grant awards and contractual agreements prior to payment authorization.

Project Budget and Budget Justification

Maryland PDG B-5 Budget Narrative Year 1

Object Class Categories	Federal	Non-federal	Total
a. Personnel	972,000	0	972,000
b. Fringe Benefits	216,859	0	216,859
c. Travel	16,600		16,600
d. Equipment	0	0	0
e. Supplies	5,742	0	5,742
f. Contractual	8,395,000	3,000,000	11,395,000
g. Construction	0	0	0
h. Other	45,661	0	45,661
i. Total Direct Charges	9,651,861	3,000,000	12,651,861
j. Indirect Charges	348,134	0	348,134
k. TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)	9,999,996	3,000,000	12,999,996

Budget Category - Personnel \$972,000

Recruitment of 11.0 FTE - 1 Project Manager, 1 Fiscal Specialist, 3 IT Staff Specialist, and 6 Education Specialist. At an average cost of \$100,000 for the Project Manager, \$94,000 each for 6 Education Specialist and 4.0 FTE (Fiscal & IT Specialist) at a cost of \$77,000. The eleven contractual employees will be responsible for supporting the five activity areas.

Budget Category - Fringe Benefits \$216,859

Required contributions for contractual employees include unemployment insurance (.28% of salary), FICA/Medicare subsidy (7.65% of salary), and health benefit subsidy (estimated \$15,531 for 9 of the 11 staff).

Budget Category – Travel \$16,00

Travel for employees to national, state, local meetings/conferences (Regional Meetings, site visits, Alabama Early Childhood Conference).

Budget Category – Supplies\$5,742

Office supplies MSDE standard of \$522 per employee x 17 employees.

Budget Category – Contracts \$8,395,000

Contracts and sub grants support the following (proposed vendors are in parentheses):

Activity 1: PDG B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment (\$20,000)

Project 1.1: Needs Assessment (\$10,000)

Replicate process used in the Initial Grant period

Project 1.2. Comprehensive Facilities Study

Study of child care, FCC and school-based facilities informed by findings of the 2019 Needs Assessment (\$10,000)

Activity 2: PDG B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan (\$10,000)

Project 2.1: Strategic Plan (\$10,000)

The state will begin the process of developing an updated 5-year Strategic Plan for release in 2024, including (\$10,000):

- Work with stakeholders to finalize strategic actions and indicators in 5-Year Strategic Plan
- Submit 5-Year Strategic Plan to ACF
- Release updated 5-year Strategic Plan
- Continue feedback loops with ECAC and LECAC's on 5-Year Strategic Plan Implementation
- Replicate strategic planning process Community Roundtables

Activity 3: Maximizing Parent Choice and Knowledge (\$360,000)

Project 3.1. Scale the *LENA Grow* project, and evidence-based model that focuses on increasing interactive talk and supporting language development to partner with additional FSCs (\$50,000).

Project 3.2. Expand Teen Parenting child care model via Family Support Center grants (\$50,000).

Project 3.3. The UM School of Social Work in partnership with MSDE's Department of Special Education and Early Intervention, will promote and support inclusive settings through professional development for child care providers in developmentally appropriate practices, universally designed instruction, formative assessment, evidence-based, social-emotional interventions – all paired with ongoing reflective coaching provided by trained coaches (\$100,000).

Project 3.4 Partner with MPT to expand PDG B-5 comprehensive communications strategy through Public Service Announcements, text messaging platform, and coordination with the Maryland Department of Health and UM School of Medicine (\$50,000).

Project 3.5. Expand distribution of hospital outreach kits and *Developmental Milestones* Calendars in coordination with the Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Department of Human Services (\$20,000).

Project 3.6. Family Engagement Summit, 2 annual statewide summits and 1 year of local level summits through LECACs (\$30,000).

Project 3.7. MFN will implement 40 parent cafes and regional training opportunities for parents as part of Strengthening Families (\$25,000).

Project 3.8. Ready at Five will expand two learning parties to include media and financial literacy and implement them in 6 jurisdictions (\$25,000).

Project 3.9. Partner with effective fatherhood engagement initiatives to involve fathers of young children in their early care and learning (\$10,000).

Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce (\$1,900,000)

Project 4.1. Update the *Maryland Knowledge and Competency Framework for Child and Youth Care Professionals* (\$25,000).

Project 4.2. Develop a comprehensive statewide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health framework and toolkit (\$25,000).

Project 4.3. Increase the number of licensed Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants that can provide CSEFEL Pyramid Model coaching and implement the Facilitation Attuned Interactions (FAN) two-generation approach 5 consultants to reach to reach 15% more kids. (\$400,000).

Project 4.4. Expand inquiry-based coaching and resources for the Children Study Their World (CSW) and Children Explore Their World curricula. The UM will conduct Inquiry-based Professional Development for CSW in 100 and 250 CEW child care, Head Start and family care providers, as well as provide a tablet-based access to the preschool curriculum, children's books, math materials, and coaching support (\$1,000,000).

Project 4.5. Continue training cohorts of professionals to support multi-language learners through the WIDA Early Years program through year-long technical assistance, two partnership kick-off events, two institutes, one Training of Trainers, Promising Practices Implementation Kit roll-out events, Parent Forums, on-line modules and resources, and training and implementation of the multi-language learner identification tool (\$175,000).

Project 4.6. Increase the start-up bonuses to support FCC providers, which will help increase the availability of quality providers, particularly in rural areas of the state (\$50,000).

Project 4.7. Partner with the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance and NAFCC to do a statewide FCC capacity study to better understand and address the declining numbers of family child care providers (\$20,000).

Project 4.8. Partner with the Council of Professional Recognition to update expired CDAs and keep current CDAs and then increase the number of teachers receiving CDAs (\$50,000).

Project 4.9. Coordinate with Family Support Centers that provide comprehensive services to families with children younger than three to provide training and coaching on *Zero to Three's* Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators (\$50,000).

Project 4.10. Explore design of online BA (25,000).

Project 4.11. Implement Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (\$25,000).

Project 4.12. Partner with the Maryland Family Child Care Alliance to increase participation, leadership, and engagement (\$15,000).

Project 4.13. Partner with the Latino Child Care Association to increase participation, leadership, and engagement (\$15,000).

Project 4.14. Partner with MAEC to implement a TOT Equity Training model and align MSDE contracts with state equity regulations and NAEYC (\$50,000).

Activity 5: Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs (including subgrants) (\$930,000)

Subgrant 1

Activity 1a. Award 5 competitive grants to local entities to implement Infant Toddler Models Subgrants (\$500,000).

Subgrant 2

Activity 2a. Award local ECAC Best Practices grants 24 jurisdictions to implement quality initiatives identified by the needs assessment and scale the implementation of 2-generation evidence-based models (\$400,000).

Activity 2b. Award Library Grants of \$1,000 to \$2,500 for the enrichment of children in informal child care settings or cared for at home based on needs assessment (\$30,000).

Activity Six: Monitoring, Evaluation and Data Use for Continuous Improvement (\$5,050,000)

Project 6.1. MSDE will work with existing state contract vehicles, as well as procurement processes to modernize, integrate, and improve the current ECE data system and implement a unique identifier pilot. (\$5,000,000).

Project 6.2. MSDE will partner with an independent contractor to develop and conduct a program performance evaluation that will monitor ongoing processes and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project (\$50,000).

Bonus Points (\$100,000)

Bonus Points: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families

NO additional costs.

Bonus Points: Infant/Toddler Emphasis

NO additional costs.

Bonus Points: Collaborative Transition and Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

Bonus Project 1. MSDE will create the Maryland Leadership Academy for Principals and ECE Directors focused on effective transitions from early childhood into Kindergarten and the early grades (\$25,000).

Bonus Project 2. Implement the *Preschool and Kindergarten Attendance in Maryland: Examining Current Practices and Promising Policy and Intervention Strategies* project in partnership with Attendance Works and UM. This project will yield deeper understanding of patterns of early childhood education program attendance in Maryland, and inform the development of strategies to enhance attendance from prekindergarten through the transition to kindergarten and the first few years of elementary school (\$75,000).

Budget Category – Other \$45,661

Federal and Local Technical Assistance Meetings \$25,000

The following MSDE budget standards comprise other costs:

- Rental for office space: \$13,718 annually (\$1,247 per FTE per year)
- Copier: \$3,190 annually (\$290 per FTE per year)
- Insurance: \$594 annually (\$54 per FTE per year)

Budget Category - Indirect \$348,134

Maryland State Department of Education's current approved indirect cost rate agreement is 17.7% based on MTDC.

Budget Category - State Match \$3,000,000

State Funds in the amount of \$3,000,000 appropriated in SFY2020 to provide access to the grant-funded Judy Centers which benefits children and families in local communities. Through a dedicated staff of early learning professionals, the Centers help prepare children age birth through five for school readiness and success.

Bonus Points*Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment*

The application presents two clear and detailed plans for a unified application and enrollment system that is currently being developed in consultation with parents. The first involves the modernization of the data system (see *Activity Six*), which includes a revision of the data sharing agreements between MSDE, MDH, and DHS that will enable the state to streamline eligibility and enrollment procedures for families who may be eligible for multiple programs. As discussed above, the state is conducting “Greenhouse” sessions with parents and other stakeholders to better understand their current experiences with application and enrollment processes that will inform the new data system modules that support coordinated enrollment. The data system work that the state is doing to develop a unique identifier will also support a coordinated application, enrollment and eligibility process. Second, and more immediately, the subgrants to the LECAC include the opportunity to support local approaches to unified application or enrollment approaches, which also will inform the development of the statewide coordinated data system.

Infant/Toddler Emphasis

As one of the biggest needs identified by stakeholders, supporting infants and toddlers and their families is a priority across the application. First, the state has increased its child care subsidy rate for infants and toddlers. Also, within this application, the initiatives related to professional development for infant and toddler educators and hospital outreach kits, as well as the scaling up

on LENA Grow in *Activity 3*; understanding the capacity of FCC providers and increasing the number of FCC providers through startup grants, the development of an IECMH framework, and the increase in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants in *Activity 4*; and the two-generation direct service subgrants for *HealthySteps*, ABC, COS-P, and Family Connects in *Activity 5*, are clear indications of the state's emphasis on building capacity for high-quality infant/toddler services across the state's mixed delivery system and programs that meet the specific needs of communities.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth

During the Town Halls, ECE providers and public school teachers and administrators discussed gaps between the two systems and what was working and not working as children and families transition from ECE programs into kindergarten and the early grades. As one ECE teacher noted, the connection between ECE programs and schools depends on the willingness of directors and principals to make the connection. With this statement in mind, Maryland will develop and implement a series of leadership academies for principals and ECE directors across the state to focus on joint professional development, data sharing, aligning curricula, and supporting parents (**Bonus Project 1**). In addition, Maryland will build off of the work in the Initial Grant and implement the *Preschool and Kindergarten Attendance in Maryland: Examining Current Practices and Promising Policy and Intervention Strategies* (**Bonus Project 2**) in partnership with Attendance Works and the University of Maryland. This project will yield deeper understanding of patterns of early childhood education program attendance and inform the development of strategies to enhance attendance from prekindergarten through the transition to kindergarten and the first few years of elementary school.

Conclusion

The plan presented here will continue to move Maryland toward its ultimate vision for a fully coordinated and aligned B-5 ECE system. The proposed grant activities build on the state's current early childhood infrastructure and will promote equity for children who are vulnerable or underserved. The system improvements will support stronger child outcomes and provide parents with the resources they need to support their children and fulfill the role as their first and most important teacher.