

## **Project Summary**

**Project Title:** Alabama Connections for Early Care and Education

**Applicant Name:** Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

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The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) proposes an intentional plan to further develop and implement a unified system that includes a comprehensive and coordinated effort to provide from existing Federal, State, local and non-governmental resources effective and efficient services to meet the needs of children and parents. Through this much needed system, Alabama will update and consolidate existing state needs assessments to develop a strategic plan that facilitates collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education in a mixed delivery system across the State. It will be designed to realize the vision that all children are healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten, particularly low-income and disadvantaged children, and that strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices for successful transitions to schools.

In 2000 the Alabama Legislature passed Alabama Code Title 26: Infants and Incompetents 26-24-1 for the creation of DECE with the duty of “preparing and submitting to the Governor and the Legislature annual reports on activities and expenditures of state and local agencies related to children; all state, local, and federal funding available for children's programs other than education programs offered by the Department of Education for K-12; and recommendations of proposed legislation on the most efficient utilization of resources available in order to maximize services provided to children.” The duties of this office were expanded in 2016 to “develop a cohesive and comprehensive system of high quality early learning and care.” This is a continuously improving and evolving yet challenging duty.

With support from the new PDG B-5 grant, Alabama can meet this responsibility and more intentionally use existing resources to improve the overall participation of children in a mixed delivery system of Federal, State, and local early childhood care and education programs, improve program quality while maintaining and increasing availability of services, expand parental choice and knowledge about existing programs, and enhance school readiness for children especially those from low-income and disadvantaged families.

Alabama has an existing successful partnership model among Head Start providers, Home Visitation programs, State and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities (including faith and community-based entities), child care, higher education, and local educational agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services for four-year-old pre-k programs. This grant will support the scaling of the state’s nationally recognized pre-k program of quality and equity to the broader system of early childhood care and education for all children birth-five.

## Table of Contents

### File 1

Project Summary/Abstract.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Project Description.....	3
Approach: Activities 1-5	
PDG B-5 Goals.....	4
Governance	
Workforce Development	
Program Quality Measurement and Improvement	
Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education	
Data Systems	
Monitoring and Accountability	
ACTIVITY ONE: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan.....	7
ACTIVITY TWO: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan.....	23
ACTIVITY THREE: Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Choice.....	33
ACTIVITY FOUR: Sharing Best Practices.....	41
ACTIVITY FIVE: Improving Overall Quality.....	47
Organizational Capacity and Management.....	51
Program Performance Evaluation Plan.....	52
Logic Model.....	54
Sustainability Plan.....	55
Dissemination Plan.....	56
Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds.....	59
Budget and Budget Justification.....	62

### File 2

#### Appendices

Organizational Chart

Governor's Official Letter\*

\*Additional letters of commitment from the Alabama Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Education, and Human Resources available upon request.

## **Project Description**

### **Approach: Activities 1-5**

The new PDG B-5 grant will advance the efforts of Alabama to innovatively develop and implement a strategic plan guided by the state's need assessment that facilitates collaboration and coordination between existing state programs of early care and education in a mixed delivery system across the state. This early childhood care and education strategic plan will inform, change, and guide the further development of a system designed to prepare all children, in particular low-income and disadvantaged children, to enter kindergarten, and to improve the transitions of children from this system into the local education agency (LEA). The system design will align and streamline the structures and functions that will create more effective use of existing federal, State, and non-governmental resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs; the coordination of delivery models and funding streams existing in the state's mixed delivery system; and provide recommendations to better use current resources to improve the overall participation of children in a mixed delivery system. This intentional alignment of systems will lead to improved program quality while maintaining availability of services, expanding parental choice and knowledge about existing programs, and enhancing school readiness. The ECAC met to discuss existing supports for early childhood services for children birth-five and provide guidance in developing strategies for this grant proposal.

The program design will include approaches to encourage partnerships and coordination among Head Start providers, Home Visitation programs, state and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities (including faith- and community-based entities), child care, institutions of higher education, state agencies, and local education agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services. Additionally, the program design will incorporate

methods to provide opportunities for parental voice and choice within a mixed delivery system of early childhood care and education program providers.

Disconnects can arise with different pedagogical approaches between early childhood programs and LEAs with regards to the definition of school readiness. This provides an opportunity to strengthen the work we have started with defining readiness, implementing standards and developmentally appropriate assessments and practices for the early childhood years. We will also use coordination agreements to plan joint professional learning opportunities for elementary teachers, Head Start staff, state-funded pre-k, and child care providers. Local Head Start programs will collaborate with LEAs to align school readiness goals with kindergarten entry assessments. We also face misalignment in our efforts when we have vastly different eligibility guidelines, funding sources and cycles, reporting requirements, and cost allocation rules. We will work with the State to take a holistic approach to designing accountability systems that span the continuum of education by aligning child care licensing, QRIS, and school accountability systems. We will further strengthen these efforts by utilizing the Children Policy Councils to share consistent messages and solicit feedback and support in all sixty-seven counties.

### **PDG B-5 GOALS**

The PDG B-5 grant submitted by Alabama will create a systemic approach to ensure our governance structure supports the following goals outlined in the grant: workforce development, program quality measurement and improvement, early intervention and early childhood special education, data systems, and monitoring and accountability. The goals below will provide the foundation for this effort and are expounded on in Activities 1-5 of the proposal. Measurable indicators of progress will be defined from the needs assessment and the strategic plan.

## **Governance**

*Alabama has an existing governance structure that promotes accountability, coordination, alignment, efficiency and sustainability.* Alabama Code created DECE with the duty of “preparing and submitting to the Governor and the Legislature annual reports on activities and expenditures of state and local agencies related to children; all state, local, and federal funding available for children's programs other than education programs offered by the ALSDE for K-12; and recommendations of proposed legislation on the most efficient utilization of resources available in order to maximize services provided to children.” The duties of this office were expanded in 2016 to “develop a cohesive and comprehensive system of high quality early learning and care.” Alabama will develop a steering/ECAC committee (to be called the PDG B-5 committee) of key partners across the state to guide and direct the work of the needs assessment and strategic plan.

<b>Organizations Represented on the PDG B-5 Committee</b>	
Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) Office of School Readiness (OSR) Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) VOICES for Alabama’s Children (VOICES) Alabama Head Start Association (AHSA) Alabama Medicaid (Medicaid) Alabama Early Intervention Services (AEIS) Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (CANP) Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA) Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL)	American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Alabama Association for Early Care and Education (AALECE) Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Alabama Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (First 5 Alabama) Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Local government representatives Head Start providers Indian tribe and tribal organization representative Faith-based representatives Community-based organization representatives Non-governmental organization representatives Children’s Policy Councils (CPC)

### **Workforce Development**

*Alabama's grant proposal is focused on ensuring every child has an opportunity to receive high quality early learning and care experiences.* Targeted efforts in workforce development will allow the State to build capacity for strengthening this area. The strategies outlined in the grant will focus on increased compensation for early childhood workers. Alabama is committed to increasing the number of high-quality early childhood professionals in our state, improving early childhood work environments, and increasing workforce in the state. These goals will be met through leveraging existing resources while intentionally addressing gaps and inequities.

<b>Existing Resources</b>	
Alabama Early Learning Network Alabama Pathways Professional Development Lattice and Registry Alabama Coaching Competencies T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships Alabama Quality Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) First Teacher Home Visiting Leadership Academies Needs Assessment Strategic Plan Infant/Toddler Specialist Network

### **Program Quality Measurement and Improvement**

*Alabama is committed to offering high quality early learning and care opportunities for children and families.* We will utilize existing measures and identify gaps in this area as part of our efforts. Efficient, valid, and reliable indicators of program quality will support child health and safety and will be predictive of school readiness. Alabama has systems in place that we will build upon, supporting program quality and improvement.

<b>Current Systems</b>	
Talk with me Baby/Read Right from the Start Modules Quality Enhancement Funds Culturally Responsive Leadership Training Playground enhancement grants and technical assistance	Online Training Modules Mobility Mentoring Research Evaluation QRIS

### **Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education**

*Alabama utilizes several strategies to support our efforts around continuous improvement in providing services for families with children who have developmental delays.* Students receive

services through early intervention and early childhood special education to address academic and social-emotional challenges. Additionally, the Child Trauma Aware Academy provides comprehensive support by providing content knowledge regarding trauma-aware practices and by assisting the childcare provider through reflective coaching.

<b>Strategies</b>	
Child Trauma-Aware Academy State Systems Improvement Plan (SSIP) Reports Routines-Based Interview (RBI) and Routines-Based Home Visiting (RBHV) Training	

### **Data Systems**

*The Governor has tasked the P20 Workforce Council with establishing a statewide data system that connects child, family, program, and workforce data.* This council consists of agency heads and is chaired by the Governor. The sole responsibility of this council is to develop and manage the statewide Longitudinal Data System.

<b>Data</b>	
State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) ASAP registration management	ThinkData Solutions, Inc. ECEData

### **Monitoring and Accountability**

*Alabama has incorporated monitoring and accountability measures into all activities and programs in the PDG B-5 grant.* The State will provide efficient, coordinated oversight of early childhood programs that support program improvement.

<b>Accountability Measures</b>	
QRIS Program Monitors Technical Assistance	IO Education - Baseline platform ECEData

### **ACTIVITY ONE: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan**

Alabama will conduct a statewide birth through five needs assessment of the availability and quality of existing programs in the State, including such programs serving the most vulnerable or underserved populations and children in rural areas, and, to the extent practicable, the unduplicated number of children awaiting service in such programs. The statewide needs assessment will

structure supports the following goals outlined in the grant: workforce development, program quality measurement and improvement, early intervention and early childhood special education, data systems, and monitoring and accountability.

### **A. Expected Outcomes**

The outcomes that will be derived from the statewide birth through five needs assessment include:

- Increased collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education across the State; Identification of opportunities for increased efficiency in the use of federal, State, local, and non-governmental resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs; Identification of opportunities to better coordinate the delivery models and funding streams existing in the State's mixed delivery system; Identification of gaps and inequities to better use existing resources to improve the overall participation of children in a mixed delivery system of federal, State, and local early childhood care and education programs; and Strengthened partnerships among Head Start providers, State and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities, child care, and local educational agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services.

### **B. Approach**

Alabama has outlined a plan of action for conducting a statewide birth through five needs assessment that includes 6 phases, which are listed below and described in greater detail in the "B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Scope of Work and Work Plan" section:

- 1) Develop a steering committee of key partners across the State to guide and direct the work of the needs assessment and strategic plan.
- 2) Review, consolidate, and integrate existing birth through five needs assessments across the State to identify common and overlapping needs, priorities, resources, and best practices.



- 3) Synthesize and analyze existing quantitative data about the birth through five population in Alabama and the availability and quality of existing programs, including those that serve the most vulnerable and underserved populations and children in rural areas.
- 4) Collect and analyze qualitative data about the birth through five population in Alabama and the availability and quality of existing programs, including those that serve the most vulnerable populations and children in rural areas, through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process.
- 5) Develop a needs assessment report that synthesizes the outcomes of the needs assessment process outlined above for review by the Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families.
- 6) Survey parents of preschoolers to collect information regarding challenges and barriers to enrollment and what could be done to facilitate enrollment.

### **C. Funding for B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment**

Alabama plans to invest approximately \$315,000 to conduct a birth through five statewide needs assessment. This funding will be used for meeting materials and technical assistance from an external consultant to add capacity, expertise, and project management services to the process described in the “B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Scope of Work and Work Plan” section below.

### **D. Project Innovations**

Alabama’s approach to conducting a birth through five statewide needs assessment includes extraordinary social and community involvement, through a collaborative approach and a robust stakeholder engagement process. With the goal of implementing a statewide strategic plan to facilitate collaboration and coordination among early childhood care and education programs in a mixed-delivery system, Alabama recognizes the statewide needs assessment and strategic planning processes must be collaborative from the very beginning. Alabama has an existing successful partnership model among Head Start providers, Home Visitation programs, State and

local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities (including faith and community-based entities), child care, and local educational agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services for four-year-old pre-k programs. This grant will support the scaling of the State's nationally recognized pre-k program of quality and equity to the broader system of early childhood care and education for all children birth through age five. It will also build upon this successful partnership model and expand it to include additional birth through five partners and providers.

Alabama will accomplish this in part through development of a collaborative steering/ECAC committee (to be called the PDG B-5 Committee) to guide and inform the needs assessment and strategic planning work. In addition, Alabama will conduct a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process that will maximize social and community involvement. The structure of the committee and the design of the stakeholder engagement process for the needs assessment and the strategic plan will include strategies for engaging new and existing partners. Alabama will leverage existing networks of partners across the State to inform both the statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. Working in collaboration with nearly 30 partner agencies and organizations, APC developed Alabama's *Blueprint for Zero to Five*, a plan for implementing a unified approach to improving outcomes of children from birth to age five. The needs assessment and strategic planning process will be designed to build on and leverage the collaborative success of these types of partnerships.

Alabama's approach to conducting a birth through five statewide needs assessment will create efficiencies and reduce cost and time, through an integrated approach to the statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. This integrated approach to the B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment (Activity 1) and B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan (Activity 2) is outlined in the Funding Opportunity

Announcement (FOA). Partners engaged and activities undertaken within the scope of work outlined for Activity 1 will inform the development of work undertaken in Activity 2.

Alabama's approach to conducting a birth through five statewide needs assessment will create efficiencies and reduce cost and time, because Alabama proposes a resource-driven approach. Alabama understands that early childhood care and education programs and agencies across the state are already deploying existing federal, State, local, and non-governmental resources to provide services and implement solutions that are making a difference in Alabama. Through the needs assessment process, including a process of reviewing and integrating existing needs assessments, Alabama will be able to identify opportunities to more efficiently use existing federal, State, local, and non-governmental resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs, capturing opportunities for enterprise-level resource deployment for the State.

Alabama's approach to conducting a birth through five statewide needs assessment is innovative, in the visionary creation of the Department by legislative code for the Department to coordinate state resources and services for the state's children and families. Additionally, Alabama's approach is data-driven and includes strategies for using both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the needs assessment and promote measurement of key indicators.

Alabama will use a mixed methods approach to the needs assessment, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the needs assessment and strategic plan. Quantitative data collected through the proposed needs assessment process will provide the baseline data needed to measure progress toward identified goals and metrics. Through a data analytics partner, existing data sources will be integrated, creating a rich resource and mechanism for tracking demographic changes and outcomes over time. While specific metrics will be identified during the strategic planning process, the foundation for effective and consistent measurement of progress

will be laid out through the quantitative data collection process that occurs during the needs assessment process. Qualitative data collected through the proposed needs assessment process will engage the full range of stakeholders and collect key insights from those stakeholders to supplement quantitative data, provide information about the current landscape of early childhood care and education in Alabama, and identify strategies and solutions for improvement and increased efficiency.

#### **E. Potential Obstacles and Challenges**

Alabama anticipates several potential challenges to accomplishing project goals and has developed strategies that will be used to address these challenges.

##### **Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Variations in Needs Assessment Methodology.**

Partners and providers across Alabama have conducted a number of individual needs assessments, plans, and studies across the State, and these studies vary widely in methodology, creating a challenge in understanding the full landscape of early childhood care and education. To overcome the challenge of variation in methodologies of existing needs assessments, Alabama proposes as a central component of its statewide needs assessment process to conduct a thorough inventory and analysis of these existing needs assessments across the State. This inventory will clarify and provide a better understanding of the methodologies, knowledge, expertise, needs, and gaps across the State.

##### **Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Silos among Early Childhood Care and Education**

**Providers.** Alabama is aware that, despite concerted efforts on many levels, silos among early childhood care and education partners and providers currently exist in some areas. These silos can exist across geographic areas and areas of expertise or focus. To overcome this challenge, Alabama proposes a qualitative data collection process focused on a robust stakeholder

engagement as a central component of the needs assessment process. This stakeholder engagement process will bring together key partners and providers across geographic and focus areas, thereby continuing to break down silos and barriers where they may exist. The communication and intentionality behind this process, supported and guided by the collaborative, cross-sector PDG B-5 Committee, will support Alabama's efforts to address the challenge of maximizing partnership opportunities.

**Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Lack of Data in Underserved and Rural**

**Communities.** Identifying reliable, meaningful data about the birth through five population in Alabama can be a challenge, especially in underserved and rural communities. As a state with a significant number of rural communities, Alabama anticipates encountering this challenge in conducting a statewide needs assessment. To address this challenge, Alabama will work with agencies and partners across the state to identify existing data, identify where there are gaps in the data, and develop strategies to fill these gaps in data in the future. Alabama will also look at best practices from other states that have encountered this challenge to identify strategies to identify and use data, especially data relating to underserved and rural communities.

**F. Planned Process for Developing an Effective B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment, Including Defined Scope of Work and Work Plan**

Alabama has a planned process for conducting an effective needs assessment, including a defined scope and work plan. The planned process includes five phases, and each phase with its defined scope and work plan are described in detail below. Each phase of the work will drive Alabama toward development of a needs assessment for how the state can best ensure that all children are healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten, particularly low-income and disadvantaged

children, and that strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices for successful transitions to schools.

### **Phase 1: Collaborative Steering/ECAC Committee (PDG B-5 Committee)**

Alabama will develop a steering/ECAC committee of key partners across the state to guide and direct the work of the needs assessment and strategic plan. This “PDG B-5 Committee” will meet regularly throughout the needs assessment and strategic planning process, providing the infrastructure for collaboration and coordination at the statewide level that could be replicated and modeled at the county and local levels.

#### **Phase 1 Work Plan**

- Identify key partner agencies and organizations; Invite key partner agencies and organizations to join the PDG B-5 Committee; and Set a regular meeting schedule for the PDG B-5 Committee aligned with the needs assessment and strategic planning processes.

#### **Phase 1 Anticipated Outcomes**

- Increase collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education across the State; Strengthen partnerships among Head Start providers, State and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities, and local educational agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services; Obtain consensus about foundational components of the needs assessment, such as definitions of key terms related to ECE, including quality early childhood care and education, availability, vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas; and the Development of partnerships to support collaboration, coordination, and alignment at the statewide level.

**Phase 1 Timeline and Funding Needs.** The timeline for Phase 1 will be 12 months and the funding required will be for meeting materials.

## **Phase 2: Integration of Existing Needs Assessments**

Alabama will leverage other federal and State needs assessments through a thorough review, consolidation, and integration process for existing birth through five needs assessments across the state to identify common and overlapping needs, priorities, resources, and best practices. This process will include identification of other federal and State needs assessments, as well as assessments and plans from early childhood care and education programs and agencies across the state. Specifically, Alabama will use these federal, State, and local needs assessment to create a comprehensive Needs Assessment Chart that will capture the source/program name, assessment goals, originating agency, and related data reports which can be used as a resource for identifying service gaps.

Examples of federal, State, and local needs assessments across the state that Alabama has already identified to be reviewed and consolidated include:

- *Blueprint for Zero to Five*, 2018 (APC); *State Advisory Council Final Report*; *Head Start/Early Head Start Community Assessment*, 2017 – 2018 (Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Inc.); *Alabama Head Start Needs Assessment*, 2016 (Alabama Head Start); *Head Start Community Needs Assessment 2015*, FY 2017-2018 Update (Organized Community Action Program, Inc.); *Community Assessment Update*, 2017 (Tuskegee-Macon County Head Start); *Community Needs & Resources Assessment*, 2017 (Community Action Partnership of North Alabama); and the *State Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Needs Assessment*, 2011 (APC)

Additional needs assessments and studies that include key data that may be integrated into the needs assessment include:

• *HOPE Data Report, 2018; Jefferson County Report (JCCEO); UAB EHS Community Needs Assessment, 2016 and 2017 Update (UAB); Early Childcare Workforce Needs Assessment, 2018 (APC)*

Alabama anticipates a number of additional needs assessments likely exist that could be integrated into the needs assessment process. These existing needs assessments represent a wealth of knowledge and understanding about the current early childhood care and education landscape and will be integrated into the birth through five needs assessment.

This approach aligns with Alabama’s vision statement for the project. Alabama’s vision is that “all children are healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten, particularly low-income and disadvantaged children, and that strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices for successful transitions to schools.” The proposed approach leverages federal, State, and local needs assessments by conducting a thorough review and analysis of each existing needs assessment and aligning the needs, priorities, resources, and best practices from each of them into a single document. This will allow Alabama to identify common needs, priorities, resources, and best practices into consistent strategies that effectively support children in being healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten and ensure strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices for successful transitions to schools.

This approach also aligns with Alabama’s logic model for the project. Alabama’s logic model for conducting a statewide needs assessment includes a step in its action plan to “review, consolidate and integrate existing birth through five needs assessments,” including federal, State, and local birth through five needs assessments. As the logic model suggests, this activity will result in identification of additional key partners across the state, identification of opportunities to more efficiently use existing resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs,



increased understanding of needs and opportunities across the state, awareness and clarity among stakeholders, ability to take a high-level view of all state priorities to determine where gaps or opportunities might exist, and ultimately opportunities for enterprise level resource deployment to support children and families.

## **Phase 2 Work Plan**

- Collect relevant federal, State, and local needs assessments across the State; Review and analyze collected needs assessments to identify common and overlapping needs, priorities, resources, and best practices; and Compile identified common needs, priorities, resources, and best practices into a single Needs Assessment Chart.

## **Phase 2 Anticipated Outcomes**

- Identification of opportunities for increased efficiency in the use of federal, State, local, and non-governmental resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs; Identification of opportunities to better coordinate the delivery models and funding streams existing in the State's mixed delivery system; Identification of recommendations to better use existing resources in order to improve the overall participation of children in a mixed delivery system of federal, State, and local early childhood care and education programs; Identification of additional key partners across the state; Awareness and clarity among stakeholders, creating increased buy-in and ultimately aligning efforts toward achievement of shared goals; and an Ability to take a high-level view of all state priorities and determine where gaps or opportunities might exist beyond items that are typically identified.

**Phase 2 Timeline and Funding Needs.** The timeline for Phase 2 will be 2 months and funding required will be for technical assistance / external consultant.

### **Phase 3: Quantitative Data Synthesis and Analysis**

Alabama will analyze the quality and availability of programming and supports serving children birth through five, and, to the extent practicable the unduplicated number of children being served and awaiting service in existing programs through the synthesis and analysis of existing quantitative data. This will include data available through existing needs assessments identified in Phase 2, building on the knowledge of the PDG B-5 Committee partner organizations engaged through Phase 1, and leveraging expertise and services of an outside data analytics partner to identify existing data sources (such as demographic statistics and trends; outcomes data available through State Departments of Education, Early Childhood Education, and Health and Human Services; and Kids Count Data), integrate those data sources, and develop report or online dashboard to describe, to the extent practicable, the most up-to-date information about early childhood population and programs, resources, and services. This will add value to the overall project, in part, by creating the ability to track demographic and outcomes changes across the State over time. This quantitative data synthesis and analysis process will provide a full description and understanding of the populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved and children in rural areas and the availability of support services.

A clear description of the populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, as defined by the State, and children in rural areas, as understood today does not currently exist in the comprehensive way that is needed by the State. The proposed statewide needs assessment, including the quantitative data synthesis and analysis process described above, will provide the data needed to identify children who are vulnerable or underserved and children in rural areas and the availability of support services. While Alabama does not currently have comprehensive data needed to provide a clear description of vulnerable or underserved populations and children in

rural areas, anecdotal data available through existing agencies and partners suggests children who are vulnerable and underserved include, but are not limited to, children of families involved in agricultural services, children living in poverty, children in foster care, and children in unlicensed child care programs.

### **Phase 3 Work Plan**

- Identify data sources related to the birth through five population in Alabama; Identify data sources related to the availability and quality of existing programs, including those that serve the most vulnerable populations and children in rural areas; Synthesize data from all sources; Analyze data from all sources; Incorporate data, to the extent practicable, into a publicly available report or online dashboard which can be used to monitor progress toward closing service gaps; and Identify gaps in data and research.

### **Phase 3 Anticipated Outcomes**

- Description of the populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas; Identification of the current availability of early childhood care and education, including for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas; Identification of gaps in data about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children birth through five, considering the needs of working families, as well as those who are seeking employment or in job training; and the Development of baseline data for tracking progress of strategic plan and if feasible, a dashboard which can be used to track demographic changes and progress toward closing services gaps.

**Phase 3 Timeline and Funding Needs.** The timeline for Phase 3 will be 4 months and the funding required will be for technical assistance / external consultant.

#### **Phase 4: Qualitative Data Synthesis and Analysis (Stakeholder Engagement)**

Alabama will analyze the quality and availability of programming and supports serving children birth through five, and, to the extent practicable the unduplicated number of children being served and awaiting service in existing programs through the synthesis and analysis of existing qualitative data through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. The stakeholder engagement process will build alignment, strengthen existing partnerships, and identify new partnerships. Alabama will develop key messages that will be shared as part of this project to support alignment and coordination about project goals, updates, and strategies. This qualitative research will supplement the quantitative data synthesis and analysis from the previous phase. A research protocol could include interviews, focus groups, larger stakeholder meetings, and/or online surveys. The stakeholder engagement process will engage the full range of stakeholders, including educators, policy makers, providers, parents, and other key stakeholders across the State. The research protocol will be designed to explore topics relevant and needed in the needs assessment including:

- Current quality and availability of early childhood care and education; Viewing data through an equity lens; Existing programs and children awaiting services from programs; Gaps in data or research about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children birth through five; Identification and availability of child care/mixed delivery systems and supports to meet the needs of working families and families seeking employment or in-job training; Strategies to fill gaps in data or research about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children birth through five; Strategies to develop and track measurable indicators of progress that align with the State's vision and desired outcomes; Strategies for addressing early childhood care and education facilities and facility-related concerns; Barriers to the funding and provision of high-

quality early childhood care and education services and supports, and opportunities for more efficient use of resources; and Opportunities for strengthened transition supports and gaps that affect how children move between early childhood care and education programs and school entry.

#### **Phase 4 Work Plan**

- Identify key stakeholders to be engaged, including representation based on interest/expertise and geographic location; Design a qualitative data collection protocol, including questions for all formats and methods of engagement; Conduct the stakeholder engagement process; and Analyze results of stakeholder engagement process.

#### **Phase 4 Anticipated Outcomes**

- Description of the populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas; Identification of the current availability of early childhood care and education, including for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas; Identification of gaps in data about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children birth through five, considering the needs of working families, as well as those who are seeking employment or in job training; Collection of key insights from stakeholders across the State; and Increased buy-in and alignment of key stakeholders across the State, strengthening capacity for planning and implementation of the statewide birth through five strategic plan.

**Phase 4 Timeline and Funding Needs.** The timeline for Phase 4 will be 5 months and the funding required will be for technical assistance/external consultant.

#### **Phase 5: Needs Assessment Report**

Alabama will develop a needs assessment report that synthesizes the outcomes of the birth through five statewide needs assessment process outlined above for review by the Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The needs assessment

will be comprehensive, and a summary of elements to be included, along with the phase of the proposed scope of work through which they will be addressed, is included at the end of this section.

### **Phase 5 Work Plan**

- Integrate outcomes of all phases of the needs assessment proposed scope of work into a comprehensive report; and Present the needs assessment report to the PDG B-5 Committee and submit the needs assessment report to the Departments for review and approval.

### **Phase 5 Anticipated Outcomes**

- Development of a comprehensive needs assessment with statewide buy-in and support.

**Phase 5 Timeline and Funding Needs.** The timeline for Phase 5 will be 1 month and the funding required will be for technical assistance/external consultant.

### **G. ACTIVITY ONE: Summary of Timeline and Funding Needs**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Funding</b>
1	Collaborative Steering/ECAC Committee (PDG B-5 Committee)	Months 1-12	Meeting Materials
2	Integration of Existing Needs Assessments	Months 1-2	Technical assistance, external consultant
3	Quantitative Data Synthesis and Analysis	Months 1-4	Technical assistance, external consultant
4	Qualitative Data Synthesis and Analysis	Months 1-5	Technical assistance, external consultant
5	Needs Assessment Report	Months 5-6	Technical assistance, external consultant

### **H. ACTIVITY ONE: Summary of Needs Assessment Components and Scope of Work**

<b>Needs Assessment Components</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Phase 4</b>	<b>Phase 5</b>
Describe how the State defines key terms, including: quality early childhood care and education, availability, vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas	X				

Describe the populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas			X		
Identify the current quality and availability of early childhood care and education, including for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas		X	X	X	
Identify, to the extent practicable, the unduplicated number of children being served in existing programs and the unduplicated number of children awaiting service in such programs		X	X		
Identify gaps in data or research about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children birth through five, considering the needs of working families, as well as those who are seeking employment or in job training		X	X	X	
Describe the State's plan to fill these gaps in data or research to support collaboration between programs and services and maximize parental choice	X			X	
Describe the State's plan for developing and tracking measurable indicators of progress that align with the State's vision and desired outcomes	X			X	
Describe the State's plan for addressing ECE facilities and facility-related concerns	X			X	
Include an analysis of barriers to the funding and provision of high-quality early childhood care and education services and supports, and identify opportunities for more efficient use of resources	X			X	
Address transition supports and gaps that affect how children move between early childhood care and education programs and school entry	X			X	
Analyze the current status and future capacity of the workforce in the state for children's care and education, and family engagement		X	X	X	

### **ACTIVITY TWO: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan**

Alabama will develop a strategic plan that recommends collaboration, coordination, and quality improvement activities, including activities to improve children's successful transition from early childhood care and education programs into elementary schools, among existing programs in the State and local educational agencies, as well as review of recent QRIS evaluations. The statewide

strategic plan will guide a systemic, aligned approach to ensure Alabama's governance structure supports the following goals outlined in the grant: workforce development, program quality measurement and improvement, early intervention and early childhood special education, data systems, and monitoring and accountability.

### **A. Expected Outcomes**

The outcomes that will be derived from the statewide strategic plan include:

- Increased collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education in a mixed delivery system across the State; Identification of strategies designed to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten and to improve transitions from such systems into the local educational agency or elementary school that enrolls children; Identification of opportunities for increased efficiency in the use of federal, State, local, and non-governmental resources to align and strengthen the delivery of existing programs; Identification of opportunities to better coordinate the delivery models and funding streams existing in the State's mixed delivery system; Identification of recommendations to better use existing resources in order to improve the overall participation of children in a mixed delivery system of federal, State, and local early childhood care and education programs, improving program quality while maintaining availability of services, expanding parental choice and knowledge about existing programs, and enhancing school readiness for children from low-income and disadvantaged families, including during children's transition into elementary school; Strengthened partnerships among Head Start providers, State and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, private entities, child care, and local educational agencies to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services; and Identification of strategies to maximize parental choice among a mixed delivery system of early childhood care and education program providers.



## **B. Approach**

Alabama has outlined a plan of action for conducting a statewide birth through five strategic plan that includes the 4 phases below and described in greater detail in the “B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan Scope of Work and Work Plan” section:

- 1) Build understanding of previous strategic planning efforts in the state
- 2) Facilitate a strategic planning kickoff meeting to review outcomes from the needs assessment/stakeholder engagement process, identify preliminary strategic plan priorities, and design a series of strategic planning sessions, leveraging findings from needs assessment process
- 3) Facilitate a series of strategic planning sessions to confirm priorities and develop goals and objectives for the strategic plan, leveraging findings from needs assessment/stakeholder engagement process
- 4) Develop a comprehensive strategic plan report with recommendations for plan implementation

## **C. Funding for B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan**

Alabama plans to invest approximately \$88,000 on developing a birth through five statewide strategic plan. This funding will be used for meeting materials and technical assistance from an external consultant as described in the “B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Scope of Work and Work Plan” below.

## **D. Project Innovations**

Alabama’s approach to conducting a birth through five statewide strategic plan includes extraordinary social and community involvement, because Alabama proposes (1) a collaborative approach that builds on the PDG B-5 Committee developed during the needs assessment, and (2) an approach that builds on the stakeholder engagement process conducted during the needs assessment.

### **(1) Steering/ECAC PDG B-5 Committee**

The PDG B-5 Committee/ECAC input for the needs assessment will continue to be engaged to guide and direct the process to develop a strategic plan and to serve as a key resource for supporting collaboration and partnerships. The PDG B-5 Committee, which will lead development of the strategic plan, will include representation from the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). In Alabama, this Council is known as the Children's Policy Council and includes: Three appointees from business and industry made by the Governor; Lieutenant Governor; Speaker of the House of Representatives; Two members of the Alabama Senate, one appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and one appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate; Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama; Legal advisor to the Governor; Attorney General; President of the Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Association; Commissioner of the Department of Corrections; President of the District Attorneys' Association; President of the Chief Juvenile Probation Officers' Association; Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources; Administrative Director of Courts; Secretary of the Department of Early Childhood Education; Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health; Executive Director of the Department of Youth Services; State Superintendent of Education; State Health Officer; Executive Director of the Alabama Children's Trust Fund; President of the Alabama Parent-Teachers Association; Director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services; Commissioner of the Alabama Medicaid Agency; Commissioner of the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency; Administrator of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board; Director of the Office of School Readiness; Director of Voices for Alabama's Children; Director of A Journey to Manhood; President of A Coalition of 100 Black Women; President of

21st Century Youth Leadership Program; Director of the Children First Foundation; Director of the Multiple Needs Child Office; Five persons appointed by the Alabama Children's Policy Council reflecting the racial, gender, geographic, urban/rural, and economic diversity of the state.

In addition, each county in Alabama has a children's policy council. Each county children's policy council convenes at least once each quarter at the call of the chair. These policy councils will be intentionally engaged in the development of the needs assessment through the stakeholder engagement process.

Partners across the state who are represented on the PDG B-5 Committee have been collaborating through an online Alabama Collaborative Work Space. This online workspace is shared among individuals, agencies, and other partner groups working to plan and compose the Alabama PDG B-5 grant proposal. This unique and innovative strategy for collaboration has proven successful in strengthening collaboration and coordination to improve early childhood care and education in the state. This collaborative workspace will continue to be used in development of the statewide birth through five strategic plan, and Alabama will continue and build other innovative opportunities for collaboration through the grant.

## **(2) Collaboration and Engagement of the Full Range of Stakeholders**

Development of the statewide strategic plan will build on the stakeholder engagement process implemented through the statewide needs assessment process which will engage the full range of stakeholders, including educators, policy makers, providers, parents, and other key stakeholders across the state. All stakeholders engaged through this process will be meaningfully impacted, because engaging these stakeholders will provide them with a platform for informing statewide solutions, and the process will increase awareness and access to new and existing programs and reduce silos among partners and providers. Examples of results of the planning

process that will directly and meaningfully impact the full range of stakeholders include increased collaboration and strengthened partnerships, decreased duplication of services and therefore increased availability of resources, and increased awareness of and access to programs and supports for children and families.

Alabama's approach to conducting a birth through five statewide strategic plan will create efficiencies and reduce cost and time, through an integrated approach to the statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. This integrated approach to the B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment (Activity 1) and B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan (Activity 2) is outlined in the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA). E.g.: partners engaged in and activities undertaken within the scope of work outlined for Activity 1 will inform the development of work undertaken in Activity 2.

Specifically, the quantitative and qualitative data collection phases outlined in the statewide needs assessment will be used to directly inform development of a statewide strategic plan that recommends collaboration, coordination, and quality improvement activities. This includes activities to improve children's transition from early childhood care and education programs into local education agencies. The methodology for these two activities and how they relate to the strategic plan are described below.

### **Quantitative Data Collection from Activity One**

Alabama will synthesize and analyze existing quantitative data about the birth through five population in Alabama and the availability and quality of existing programs, including those that serve the most vulnerable and underserved populations and children in rural areas. This will be accomplished through integrating data available through existing needs assessments, building on the knowledge of the PDG B-5 Committee, and leveraging expertise and services of an outside data analytics partner to identify existing data sources, integrate those data sources, and develop

an online dashboard to display, to the extent practicable, the most up-to-date data about early childhood care and education programs, resources, and services. Further, the quantitative research protocol will be designed to identify indicator data to assess progress and to inform needed revisions to the plan over time, as well as to assess key desired outcomes related to delivery of services and achieved cost and resource efficiencies.

### **Qualitative Data Collection from Activity One**

Alabama will collect and analyze qualitative data about the birth through five population and the availability and quality of existing programs through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. A research protocol will include interviews, focus groups, larger stakeholder meetings, and/or online surveys to engage the full range of partners including educators, policy makers, providers, parents, and other key stakeholders across the state. The qualitative research protocol and stakeholder engagement process will be designed to collect insights needed to develop:

- Recommendations for opportunities for partnership, collaboration, coordination, and quality improvement activities and opportunities that can leverage existing resources to improve coordination, policy alignment, program quality and service delivery, across early childhood care and education programs in the B-5 Early Childhood State System, including the identification of: Activities to improve children's transition from early childhood care and education programs into elementary schools; Opportunities to incorporate new or updated federal, State, and local statutory requirements; Barriers to collaboration and coordination among existing programs in the State; Opportunities to leverage existing resources to improve coordination, policy, alignment, program quality and service delivery; Opportunities to improve children's transition from early childhood care and education programs into elementary schools; and Strategies for incorporating new or updated federal, State, and local statutory requirements.

### **E. Potential Obstacles and Challenges**

Alabama anticipates several potential challenges to accomplishing project goals and has developed strategies that will be used to address these challenges.

**Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Time and Convening.** Stakeholder engagement is a critical component of development of the strategic plan, and time and capacity for convening stakeholders, including key leaders and decision makers, can be a challenge. Alabama will address this challenge by engaging an external consultant and leveraging the PDG B-5 Committee to add capacity, develop a detailed timeline, drive completion of the plan, and build on momentum to maintain engagement and utilize stakeholder time efficiently.

**Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Communication.** In the long-term, statewide planning initiative that involves many stakeholders, strong communication with all stakeholders involved can be a challenge. Alabama will address this challenge by developing a communication strategy, identified through the needs assessment, that is designed to keep stakeholders informed, share the key project objectives and progress, and maintain stakeholder engagement. The communication strategy will also take into account and use strategies that address the challenge of broadband internet access, especially in rural areas.

### **F. Planned Process for Developing an Effective B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan, Including**

#### **Defined Scope of Work and Work Plan**

Alabama has a planned process for developing a strategic plan, including a defined scope and work plan. The planned process includes 4 phases, and each phase with its defined scope and work plan are described in detail below. Each phase of the work will drive Alabama toward development of a strategic plan for how the state can best ensure that all children are healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten, particularly low-income and disadvantaged children, and

that strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices for successful transitions to schools.

To integrate the findings from statewide needs assessment into the strategic plan, development of the strategic plan will occur through a series of facilitated planning sessions with key stakeholders, including those on the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee and others identified through the stakeholder engagement process identified in Activity 1, and will begin with a review of the findings from Activity 1 (Needs Assessment). The graphic below illustrates this overall approach and demonstrates that the strategic planning process will include focused attention on communication and building alignment and capacity for implementation of the planning process.



### **Phase 1: Build Understanding of Previous Strategic Planning Efforts in the State**

In Phase 1, Alabama will build a strong understanding of previous and existing strategic plans to integrate into the statewide strategic plan. This will help improve coordination and collaboration among its programs, better serve children and families in existing programs, and increase the overall participation of children in the State in high quality early childhood care and education programs and services in a mixed delivery system.

Alabama has several strategic plans already in existence that relate to the birth through five population. Of particular importance is *Blueprint Zero to Five*. Developed through collaboration of nearly thirty partners across the state, *Blueprint* offers a strong structure and example of

successful collaborations that can be built on to strengthen, align, and enhance quality improvement activities across the State. APC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization created to develop, design, and implement a unified approach for improving outcomes of children from birth to age five in Alabama, worked with nearly 30 key partners to develop *Blueprint*. As other federal, State, and local strategic plans are identified through the needs assessment and strategic planning processes, Alabama will incorporate them into this phase of work to improve coordination and collaboration for relevant programs and services.

### **Phase 2: Strategic Planning Kickoff Meeting**

Alabama will hold a strategic planning kickoff meeting with the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee to review outcomes from the needs assessment/stakeholder engagement process, identify preliminary strategic plan priorities, and design a series of strategic planning sessions. This will include a thorough review of findings from Activity 1, including the quantitative and qualitative data collection processes and the key items outlined above.

### **Phase 3: Strategic Planning Sessions**

Following the strategic planning kickoff meeting, Alabama will hold a series of planning sessions with key project stakeholders to establish consensus around the key components of a strategic plan including strategic priorities, goals, and objectives. The planning sessions, for example, could include multiple full-day, half-day, or two-hour planning sessions. These sessions may be organized into separate working groups based on strategic plan priorities identified in the strategic planning kickoff meeting, or they may include a single working group to focus on all priorities. The results of the needs assessment and the input of the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee in the strategic planning kickoff meeting will help determine the best design for this process.



#### **Phase 4: Strategic Plan Report**

Using the outcomes of Phases 1 through 3, Alabama will develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the State. This will be summarized in a strategic plan report that will be reviewed and approved the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee.

#### **G. Timeline and Funding Needs**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Funding</b>
1	Build Understanding of Previous Strategic Planning Efforts	Month 9	Technical assistance
2	Strategic Planning Kickoff Meeting	Month 9	Meeting materials Technical assistance
3	Strategic Planning Sessions	Month 9 – 10	Meeting materials
4	Strategic Plan Report	Month 11 – 12	Meeting materials Technical assistance

#### **ACTIVITY THREE: Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Choice**

Through Alabama's governance structure, workforce development, program quality measurement and improvement, early intervention and early childhood special education, data systems, and monitoring and accountability, strategies will be developed to support maximizing parental knowledge and choice.

Alabama will maximize parental choice and knowledge about the State's mixed delivery system of existing programs and providers by ensuring that parents are provided information about the variety of early childhood care and education programs for children from birth to kindergarten entry in the State's mixed delivery system, and promoting and increasing involvement by parents and family members, including families of low-income and disadvantaged children, in the development of their children and the transition of those children from an early childhood care and education program into an elementary school.

Parents and families play the most critical role in children's development. Parents need a wide range of community supports and connections to provide stable homes where children can

thrive and where they have the opportunity to have their input and perspectives incorporated into systems planning. This will be accomplished through parent and community education and awareness, parent surveys, improving parental understanding of how important their choices are, and encouraging more parents to choose or demand high quality programs. Additionally, efforts will be made to increase participation in existing Head Start and Early Head Start, state funded pre-kindergarten, licensed child care, home visitation, and early education programs that serve children. Parents and families will be provided timely, accurate information in a culturally relevant and linguistically sensitive manner.

DECE collaborates with multiple agencies to coordinate a wide range of early childhood care programs and services, as well as through the Children's Policy Council designated as the state's ECAC, for families and children across the state. These agencies include: APC; VOICES; FOCAL; AALECE; ALSDE; DHR; AHSA; AEIS; ADMH; CANP; ACHIA; AAP; Medicaid; and ADPH.

Strategies to maximize parental knowledge of the mixed delivery system and family choice will include:

- Enlisting public schools, child care programs, health agencies, and faith-based organizations to best reach parents. The statewide needs assessment will have identified available resources, including existing facilities of private providers and public schools, teachers (current employment status, qualifications, interest in raising their qualifications, willingness to teach), and administrators.
- Implementing the Strengthening Families framework in programs as a parent engagement model, a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect, which further supports the professional development of teachers and providers.

- Expanding the existing 2-1-1 HMG network so that early identification of concerns are addressed and referrals and care coordinators to provide linkages to community resources and connecting families to the HMG referral hotline so that more children receive the ASQ Social Emotional-2 Screening and ASQ-3 Developmental Screening.
- Technical assistance is offered to programs statewide through an application process to receive individualized family engagement plans designed to meet the specific needs of an early care and education program.
- Forming partnerships through the Inclusion Task Force with ALSDE to provide early intervention and early childhood special education services to children birth-five who qualify.
- Collaborating with IDEA preschool programs, ADMH, and AEIS to ensure that families who have concerns about their child's development and may suspect a developmental delay or disability have access to high quality early childhood care and education programs.
- Provide Culturally Responsive Leadership training for leaders in programs and services that have the ability to become part of the solution in addressing the root causes of the differential outcomes for children ages birth to age 5: EI, HMG, DHR, Medicaid, ADMH and ADPH. Federal, State, and local legislation, the Office for Civil Rights, and the Council for Exceptional Children (2006), have all called for the development of programming, screeners, assessments, interventions and curricula that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Alabama is 1 of only 7 states that allows some child care programs to legally operate unlicensed and uninspected for basic health and safety standards. Through partnerships, sharing of resources, and joint opportunities to pursue funding, shared professional development, data analysis, and innovative strategies, Alabama will work to increase participation in existing early

childhood education and care programs. APC, VOICES, and FOCAL will lead the effort in implementing a statewide public awareness campaign defining and supporting quality in child care. In 2012, APC and VOICES launched the “Don’t Be in the Dark about Child Care” campaign to educate the public about the importance of using licensed child care centers and family day care and group home providers to care for children. Also, those participating in the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, pre-k, and Head Start will receive literature and information on the campaign. In year one of the Alabama PDG B-5 grant, the project will conduct parent leadership training, and expand the “Don’t Be In The Dark About Child Care” Campaign.

AEIS Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has specific requirements for states to actively identify, locate and evaluate children to determine their eligibility. AEIS has a strong, comprehensive Child Find System which includes promoting collaboration between Head Start, Early Head Start, early education and child care programs. AEIS has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Alabama Head Start Collaboration office, Head Start, Early Head Start and East Coast Migrant programs; AEIS and Children’s Rehabilitation Service; DHR, Child Care Division; and the ALSDE Special Education Services. The purposes of the agreement are to strengthen the ability of all partners to work collaboratively in collecting data; identifying and serving children with disabilities birth to age five and their families; to coordinate the delivery of high quality, comprehensive, family-centered, culturally competent systems of community-based services; promote inclusive learning environments and experiences for all children; and to foster developmental gains for all children including those with disabilities and utilize resources efficiently and effectively by minimizing duplication of services. The roles and responsibilities of each partner are outlined in the MOA regarding public awareness;

identification and referral; evaluation and assessment; procedural safeguards; service plans; transition; personnel training and data sharing.

AEIS service coordinators partner with local child care providers in the AEIS service delivery model, IFSP development, transition planning to preschool, resource development and family support. All personnel work together to expedite referrals and support each other in bringing all the resources needed to support a child's development and to build the capacity of a family in meeting their outcomes. Child care and early childhood programs are strong and valuable partners in providing services to children birth to age three with developmental disabilities and their families. These partnerships ensure that families who have concerns about their child's development are connected to AEIS as early as possible. DECE established a task force on Inclusion for Early Childhood Systems with the goal being to drive forward the creation and expansion of inclusive learning experiences for early learning programs. This is a delivery model in which special education services are provided to a child within a general early childhood setting. The ASQ-3 has been identified as the statewide screener for use across all programs, and future goals include aligning standards to ensure they reflect inclusive practices.

Infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) refers to the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of young children and their families. As a national focus, the negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on healthy physical, mental, and emotional development is a growing concern that affects the wellbeing of families. Furthermore, early childhood experiences may directly affect the trajectory of successful learning and relationship development. Alabama has joined innovators in the field of IECMH, through the development of First 5 Alabama, to identify unmet mental health needs, and to provide comprehensive supports that span the promotion, prevention, intervention continuum across all disciplines and sectors.

Formed as the Alabama Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in 2017, First 5 Alabama was created by DECE and other founding partners, including CANP, ALSDE, ADMH, ADPH, EI, DHR, and APC, to develop new competency standards and bring changes in state and local policy, creating a systemic change that promotes positive outcomes for children and families.

Through the broad-based collaborative work of First 5 Alabama, blending resources will further support effective training and reflective practice, assist early childhood professionals in developing specific competencies, and recognize those who receive the IECMH Endorsement® to create a registry of qualified professionals across disciplines who can support early childhood providers and others with IECMH concerns.

- Build a deliberate and innovative means of taking IECMH consultation services into rural Alabama, with insights from evidence-based research in the delivery of mental health supports. The aim of this service is to support preschool parents through the promotion and awareness of the importance of a holistic approach to child development, while encouraging parent engagement.
- Create a mobile unit staffed with licensed mental health providers and parent resource assistants to serve rural areas, providing mental health consultation services to programs, teachers, and parents that focus on prevention and strengthens the transition into school. This mobile unit will provide an opportunity for parents to participate in parenting group activities. The mobile unit will be equipped with Telehealth technology through a partnership with UAB and will make available a work station where parents can utilize the Internet to apply for employment and other resources.
- Engage Medicaid to secure additional funds to match state funds appropriated by the Governor specifically to reduce the infant mortality rate in Alabama and to expand IECMH services for children and families.

Parent Education initiatives will target populations of parents, including fathers, parents who speak a language other than English, and families who are identified as most vulnerable and underserved. DECE will more effectively reach these parents by providing culturally responsive leadership training to support the State in sharing quality, access and affordable early childhood care in a culturally relevant and linguistically sensitive manner. We will use the below strategies to support our efforts:

- Fund the STAAND program through the Office of Adolescent Health - Pregnancy Assistance to work specifically with pregnant and parenting teenage mothers and fathers. The program will provide evidence-based home visiting services such as Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Nurse Family Partnerships (NFP) as well as evidence-based fatherhood programs such as 24/7 Dads.
- Address the issue of digital deserts to maximize program impact. Data shows that 41% of rural families currently have no access to internet. DECE frequently uses digital technology to reach families and develop workforce capacity, and, therefore, must address these gaps and inequities.
- Offer an online system of trainings for families covering nutrition, behavior, relationships, resilience and adult resilience. Completion of the online modules will earn a stipend that can be applied to the tuition of child care.
- Provide families a single point entry into the early childhood programs which are also currently connected to the state's K-12 education database through ALSDE. Alabama has successfully implemented a shared statewide intake and registration system for the diverse delivery pre-k system, allowing parents to make informed choices about programs in their area. Through this established infrastructure, parents use single-entry point for such programs, and children, once

enrolled, are assigned a unique state student identifier that follows them throughout their academic career.

- Coordinate with the Title V Maternal and Child Health Program Director at ADPH to support the ongoing needs assessment as well as the federally-required 5-year comprehensive, statewide Title V Maternal and Child Health needs assessment. DECE works with the State Perinatal Program Coordinator to share information about the First Teacher Home Visiting Program to support referrals for eligible families, as parents are the child's first and most important teacher.
- Support LEAs through First Teacher Home Visiting by completing developmental screenings that align with AAP best practice guidelines and school readiness screenings to identify children who may need referrals under Part C Early Intervention or special education eligibility testing. Parent educators will assist families in completing the eligibility determination process and ensure qualified children have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in place prior to entering school.
- Develop formal agreements with HMG for high-need children to receive an automatic referral for ongoing surveillance, referral, and care coordination after they are no longer eligible for Home Visiting services.
- Refer high risk mothers and babies - defined as low-weight birth, preterm, neonatal abstinence syndrome, previous infant death, etc. - from the birthing hospital to EI, Home Visiting, and/or HMG based on eligibility and access.
- Support Talk With Me Baby/Read Right From the Start to provide language nutrition in homes and across all settings, as implemented with DHR funding in 2018 through APC and partners, and Reach Out And Read – Alabama in partnership with AAP.



- Provide a program monitor for each program that receives DECE funds to assist in identifying and linking families to State resources.
- Provide parents a free opportunity to complete a developmental screener for their children at local events in their community. The developmental screeners are scored on site and parents are given information about making referrals to the appropriate agencies, Part B Section 619 or Part C, if indicated by the screener.
- Implement RBI and RBHV state training. The Alabama RBI Bootcamp is an intensive four-day training consisting of practice with real families, follow-up activities, evaluation of materials.

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR: Sharing Best Practices**

Through Alabama's governance structure, workforce development, program quality measurement and improvement, early intervention and early childhood special education, data systems, and monitoring and accountability, strategies will be developed to support identifying and sharing best practices. Alabama will focus on reducing duplication of efforts, leveraging financial and other resources, and enhancing existing program quality. Increased collaboration will lead to greater efficiency in the delivery of birth-five services. Alabama will share best practices among early childhood care and education program providers in the State to increase coordination and efficiency of services, including improving successful transitions from such programs to elementary school. Alabama will disseminate best practices and encourage continuous quality improvement through research and evaluation efforts. Moreover, shared high quality research and relevant, evidence-based training opportunities will have the greatest impact on improving and advancing early childhood professionals. The strategies to accomplish this are as follows:

- Utilize national technical assistance centers to support identifying and implementing best practices in early learning and care across the State.
- Provide systematic technical assistance through the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee on best practices to local community and faith-based organizations, Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership programs, and other relevant early childhood settings to make successful transitions and provide coaching support for curriculum and implementation of a trauma-informed approach to behavior.
- Develop and implement Leadership Academies for administrators to support school systems in understanding early learning, the impact of early childhood education, and the benefits of effective, coordinated oversight.
- Engage early childhood professionals through online professional development modules, the development of which is supported through a MIECHV Innovation grant and is successfully utilized by AEIS.
- Expand the current online learning management system administered by First 5 Alabama, which will support the competencies needed for IECMH Endorsement® through First 5 Alabama.
- Continue to provide the needed workforce data to support and expand opportunities for comprehensive professional development and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Alabama. Scholarships are currently offered for the Child Development Associate (CDA) Assessment Fee, associate degrees in child development and early care and education, and bachelor's degrees in child development and early care and education. Providing scholarships will also allow for access and completion of professional development.

- Build the education levels and competencies of the early childhood workforce and support for efforts to bridge the pay disparity across early learning and care programs. DECE will utilize federal technical assistance and research of what other states have effectively implemented regarding a tax credit for teacher pay increase.
- Increase the number and quality of early childhood professionals by offering financial incentives to institutions of higher education to pursue accreditation by National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and provide stipends to attract qualified professors.
- Partner with the ALSDE Career Tech program to bring the national CDA credentials to high school students, which will lead to high school graduates entering the workforce with a solid foundational knowledge and certification in early childhood development.
- Revise and improve the statewide professional development registry for early childhood educators through DHR's Alabama Pathways Professional Development Registry. In addition to creating a seamless plan that includes all sectors to develop a system of identifying quality, evidence-based professional development and providing endorsements and certifications with pay incentives, the registry will enable DECE to create a system that supports compensation.
- Utilize data to scale the successful Alabama Reflective Coaching model beyond the fundamental knowledge of the philosophy of coaching to the application of the methods that successfully influence performance. Build the knowledge and skills necessary to provide coaching related to adult learning and performance in the birth-five learning environment.
- Align the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children. The work of this collaboration addresses the Developmental Standards Social Emotional Goals 1-4, DHR Child

Care Development Fund goals 2.5.5; 2.5.6; 2.6; 6.2.5, 7.1.2; 7.2.1; and 7.3, and Head Start Performance Standards for Child Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well-Being (1302.45), which all include social-emotional development, screening special needs, expulsions, training on appropriate age level expectations, health and mental health, and support the efforts of the Alabama Reflective Coaching model.

- Increase the number of certified playground technical assistants through enhancement grants that will provide coaching to work with providers to develop safe, quality outdoor experiences.
- Expand the existing Infant and Toddler Specialist Network statewide for quality infant and toddler technical assistance. Create a partnership with DHR and Jefferson State Community College to support quality contractors and providers with information and consultation using the national Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) as a model.
- Pair vulnerable and underserved populations, as identified through the needs assessment, with trained mentors through Mobility Mentoring, which uses a coaching method rooted in the most current brain science. Mobility Mentoring aims to overcome the extreme stresses of poverty, by improving focus, planning, and decision-making through a two-generational approach.
- Establish an Alabama Early Learning Network to develop an action plan and strategies for implementing strengths-based coaching that is designed to build upon the wisdom of programs and ensure continuous quality improvement. The Learning Network will be comprised of individuals representing a wide range of roles including coaches, supervisors, agency administrators, program directors and teachers.
- Expand upon the successful multidisciplinary Research Evaluation team established as a part of the previous Preschool Development Grant to monitor and assess project implementation, system

expansion, and impact of project activities on family and child outcomes. In addition to DECE leadership, the Research Evaluation team includes researchers from the UAB School of Public Health, UAB School of Education, PARCA, and an external data matching company, ThinkData Solutions.

Members of the Research Evaluation team have extensive expertise in program evaluation, early childhood education, maternal and child health, econometrics, policy design and analysis, research design, and advanced empirical methods. Through regular meetings, the diverse team supports project evaluation and research to assist DECE not only in documenting progress and outcomes, but also to support data-informed decision making related to systems design and implementation. Rigorous evaluation also provides accountability to funders and stakeholders related to benefits of investment and impact for children and families. The Research Evaluation team also develops materials for dissemination, tailored to varying audiences. As further detailed in the dissemination plan, these materials include slide presentations, interactive maps, white papers, focused issue briefs, conference presentations, and peer-reviewed publications.

- Build on the existing data platform, developed by ThinkData Solutions (TDS). This involves a MOU with ALSDE and DECE that is based on a partnership with PARCA for the extraction of aggregate data and analysis of student data items located in the State's STI/iNow data system, utilizing SQL queries and other software applications as needed. The data system collects child, family, and child-level state assessment data, which supports State reporting and Federal and FERPA requirements for the measurable outcomes for which DECE is accountable.
- Utilize the online custom-developed platform for Alabama from IO Education - Baseline to provide accountability, efficiency, and transparency in analyzing data, monitoring program fidelity, and developing program sites that DECE has responsibility of oversight and reporting.

This includes all management of pre-k sites, home visitation grant sites, Head Start sites and local Children's Policy Councils. It produces program evaluations, tracks all student accountability measures, staff performance, and produces reports for the public, Governor and Alabama Legislature. This platform integrates and consolidates student data from multiple sources into one easy to use, intuitive platform. Student data such as basic demographic information, enrollment data, performance data such as attendance, discipline data, and all associated assessments and course grades if applicable are integrated into the platform. The platform integrates this disparate data on a scheduled basis based on the frequency that is appropriate and defined. IO Education - Baseline has the ability to easily perform in-depth student performance data analysis on all students involved in the programs throughout the state on any mix of data points where the state has data throughout its systems. This also provides a mobile solution for coaches, giving them the ability to collect data in the field (homes, schools, other locations) about their programs, children, and/or families for which they are responsible. This allows DECE to easily access and analyze detailed demographic data that is publicly available from the US Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and other State of Alabama datasets. This community and performance data is used in conjunction with data integrated on specific students in the program as well as case worker data gathered to give a full picture of performance and benchmarking comparison.

- Identify mentor teachers. As teachers grow in their profession, these teachers would become mentor teachers for their programs. Mentor teachers will lead their peers by demonstrating best practices in the model classroom.
- Create learning communities with mentor sites. Administrators with successful programs are an invaluable resource to all programs in their areas. By linking administrators regionally,

professional learning communities will be created to promote quality program decision making and administrative work.

- Provide early educators with the knowledge and techniques based on the most current early childhood research, to dramatically jump-start children's literacy skills to ensure consistency with the Alabama Grade Level Reading Campaign goal of all third-graders reading proficiently.
- Coordinate with DHR to align the standards for the licensing of child care facilities, including the requirements for participation in the Alabama Quality Stars Child Care Rating System, with the standards established for early childhood education programs.

#### **ACTIVITY FIVE: Improving Overall Quality**

Activity Five details strategies that address gaps and inequities identified through the needs assessment and further defined in the strategic plan. DECE anticipates that the needs assessment and subsequent strategic plan should be completed within an 8-month timeframe. Because of the well-established expertise of DECE in coordinating and aligning programs, resources, and services through a well-developed and efficient system utilizing an electronic platform, DECE has the capacity to effectively implement quality activities through a mixed delivery system as informed by the needs assessment within the remaining 4-month timeframe. Alabama's mixed delivery system is a comprehensive system of early childhood care and education services delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings, including Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and other community-based organizations that is supported by a combination of public and private funds. Pursuant to Alabama Code 26-24-1, the duties of DECE shall include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Advising the Governor and the Legislature in matters relating to the coordination of services for children under the age of 19;
- (2) Serving as a liaison between the Governor and state agencies

providing programs or services for children; (3) Educating and informing legislators and other elected officials about issues affecting children; (4) Coordinating local effort by creating a network of existing local and community groups and advocates dedicated to children to enable beneficial organizations throughout the state to assist and educate each other; (5) Actively seeking and applying for federal and private grants to fund children's programs; (6) Establishing a repository for information on programs other than education programs offered by the ALSDE, which offer services for, or are for the benefit of, or in any way affect Alabama's children, including, but not limited to, DHR, ADMH, AEIS, ADRS, ADPH, DYS, CFTF, ADECA, ABC Board, ALEA, and CANP; (7) Preparing and submitting to the Governor and the Legislature annual reports on activities and expenditures of state and local agencies related to children; all state, local, and federal funding available for children's programs other than education programs offered by the Department of Education for K-12; and recommendations of proposed legislation on the most efficient utilization of resources available in order to maximize services provided to children; (8) Preparing or causing to be prepared, and submitting for approval and adoption by the Children's Policy Council, legislation required to meet the unmet needs of children by further development and improvement of children's services; (9) Review the budget requests for children's services of any state agency that administers children's programs other than education programs offered by ALSDE; (10) Develop a cohesive and comprehensive system of high quality early learning and care.

Alignment with other Federal, State, and local early childhood care and education initiatives that impact the implementation of a B-5 mixed delivery system by taking to scale the structures, processes, and functions of the successful pre-k system will include recommendations from the statewide needs assessment to inform a continuum of evidence-based activities through



key agencies that provide the resources and services for Alabama children and families. This system will involve the implementation of the strategic plan which will encompass data management, continuous improvement, quality professional learning, and guidelines for effective, efficient, accountable programmatic functions. This PDG B-5 funding opportunity is consistent with the goals set out in current legislation and the history of collaborative work in Alabama to improve health and educational outcomes for young children with early childhood state and community partners.

DECE is administratively responsible for the State's Head Start Collaborative Office; the nationally-recognized high quality First Class Pre-K program; First Teacher Home Visiting, Alabama's state and federally-funded home visiting system; First 5 Alabama and IECMH; and provides leadership and oversight for the statewide Children's Policy Council and local Children's Policy Councils in each of the State's 67 counties. In addition to these foundational programs, DECE has a long history of partnership with other early childhood agencies and initiatives in the state.

The Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support within DECE promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 5 through professional development opportunities for those adults working with children and families. The First Teacher Home Visiting program utilizes evidence-based home visiting curricula to assist families in meeting goals pertaining, but not limited to, preparing their children for school, searching for jobs, accessing healthcare and appropriate social services and improving the overall lives of young children in our state. Programs may choose to enroll women prenatally and continue to stay involved with the family until the child enters Kindergarten. First Teacher provides grant funding

for voluntary home visiting programs that focus on school readiness, family and child health and well-being. DECE helps families access resources in their own communities.

The Alabama Head Start State Collaboration Office (AHSSCO) is located within DECE and is administratively placed to help ensure a unified early care and education system that supports low-income families. AHSSCO is a federally funded office that represents Head Start children and families in Alabama's policy and decision-making process. The office facilitates coordinating services and developing partnerships with other state and local agencies.

DECE provides leadership in the development and expansion of Alabama's nationally recognized pre-kindergarten program. The Office of School Readiness, housed within DECE, is charged with administering First Class Pre-K. Since 2012, DECE has overseen the largest ever expansion of Alabama's high-quality, voluntary First Class Pre-K program while maintaining the program's nationally recognized quality standards. DECE's leadership team has grown the state's high-quality pre-k program by more than 980%— from 57 classrooms in 2005 to 1,045 classrooms in 2019 located in all 67 counties of the state – using state and federal funds.

DECE understands that the early years lay a foundation for all life-long learning and growth. The Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support encourages inter-agency collaboration with specialized staff to provide technical assistance to licensed child care programs including family child care. To truly impact children in this critical developmental period, a focus on providing quality services from ages zero to five must be a priority. DECE has developed a strong collaborative partnership with DHR to support children ages birth through 5 in a variety of child care settings. Moving in partnership with DHR, this innovative initiative allows DECE to effectively reach more children and utilize federal grant dollars awarded to DHR more efficiently within the state. This partnership enables DECE to better develop, implement, and

expand upon best practices in social-emotional learning and reflective teaching among the state's child care providers and families, specifically focused on quality early learning and care for infants and toddlers.

DECE administers and oversees the CFTF. Each state agency submits a Plan of Investment of funds from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. DECE is responsible for reporting on each fiscal year. The CFTF uses funds from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to address unmet needs of children in the State of Alabama. Allocations from the CFTF are conditional upon the receipt of tobacco revenues. Multiple state agencies receive CFTF funds.

The Secretary of DECE chairs the state's CPC and provides support for CPCs in every county in the state. The role of the Alabama CPC is to review local county needs assessments for children from birth through age 19. Based on identified needs, the State CPC recommends and develops strategies for administrative, executive, and legislative policy. The state CPC by Executive Order #49 has been designated as the Early Childhood Advisory Council by securing CPC appointments with those required by the Head Start Act. The first meeting of the CPC as the newly designated state advisory council occurred on September 29, 2014. The reformation of the CPC/ECAC as a unified group continues to improve coordination, collaboration, and oversight of services and programs that serve children from birth-5.

### **Organizational Capacity and Management**

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Credential/Qualifications</b>	<b>Experience</b>
Secretary	B.S. Early Childhood, M.A. Ed Leadership/Admin.	ECE Teacher/Administrator 25 yrs. (public school, Head Start, Even Start, local systems)
Senior Director	B.S., M.A., Ed.S, NBCT, Ph.D. Early Childhood	ECE Teacher/Administrator and Director 25 yrs. (public school, child care, MIECHV lead, higher ed)
Senior Accountant	B.A. Business Admin., B.A. Accounting	Accounting and business admin. 13 yrs.

Ed Admin – Professional Development Manager	B.A., M.A. Early Childhood	ECE Teacher/Administrator 22 yrs. (public school, Head Start, child care)
Ed Admin – Strategic Initiatives & Family Engagement	B.S. Elementary Ed, M.A. Curriculum, Admin./Supervision, Ph.D. Ed Leadership	ECE Teacher/Administrator and Chief Equity & Engagement Officer 26 yrs. (public school, local and state-level systems, higher ed)
Principal Investigator	B.A. Public Health, MSOT, MCH, Ph.D. Public Admin. and Policy	Early Intervention, Physical Therapy, MCH Block Grant, State ECE Research and Evaluation Lead, MIECHV P.I. 26 yrs.

### **Program Performance Evaluation Plan**

DECE will partner with the Department of Health Care Organization and Policy (HCOP) at the UAB School of Public Health (UAB SOPH) to coordinate research evaluation activities and implementation of the dissemination plan for the PDG B-5 grant. This team has successfully worked with DECE as a part of the current PDG, supporting overall project evaluation and research related to First Class Pre-K, the Alabama Integrated Approach to Early Learning, and other early childhood systems initiatives. As a result of this ongoing partnership, the team and DECE have publicly released six issue briefs, one white paper, one working summary paper, multiple system survey reports, two evaluation reports, and various presentations. This will support increasing the quality, coordination, dissemination, alignment, and efficiency of programs and services.

UAB SOPH will continue to lead and facilitate the multi-disciplinary Research Evaluation team, which includes the UAB School of Education and PARCA. The team includes members with extensive expertise in early childhood education and health, mixed method program evaluation, research design, advanced analytical methods, econometrics, data visualization/mapping, policy evaluation, birth to 5 systems, and data-matching and database preparation.

The Research Evaluation team will support grant activities in the following general areas:

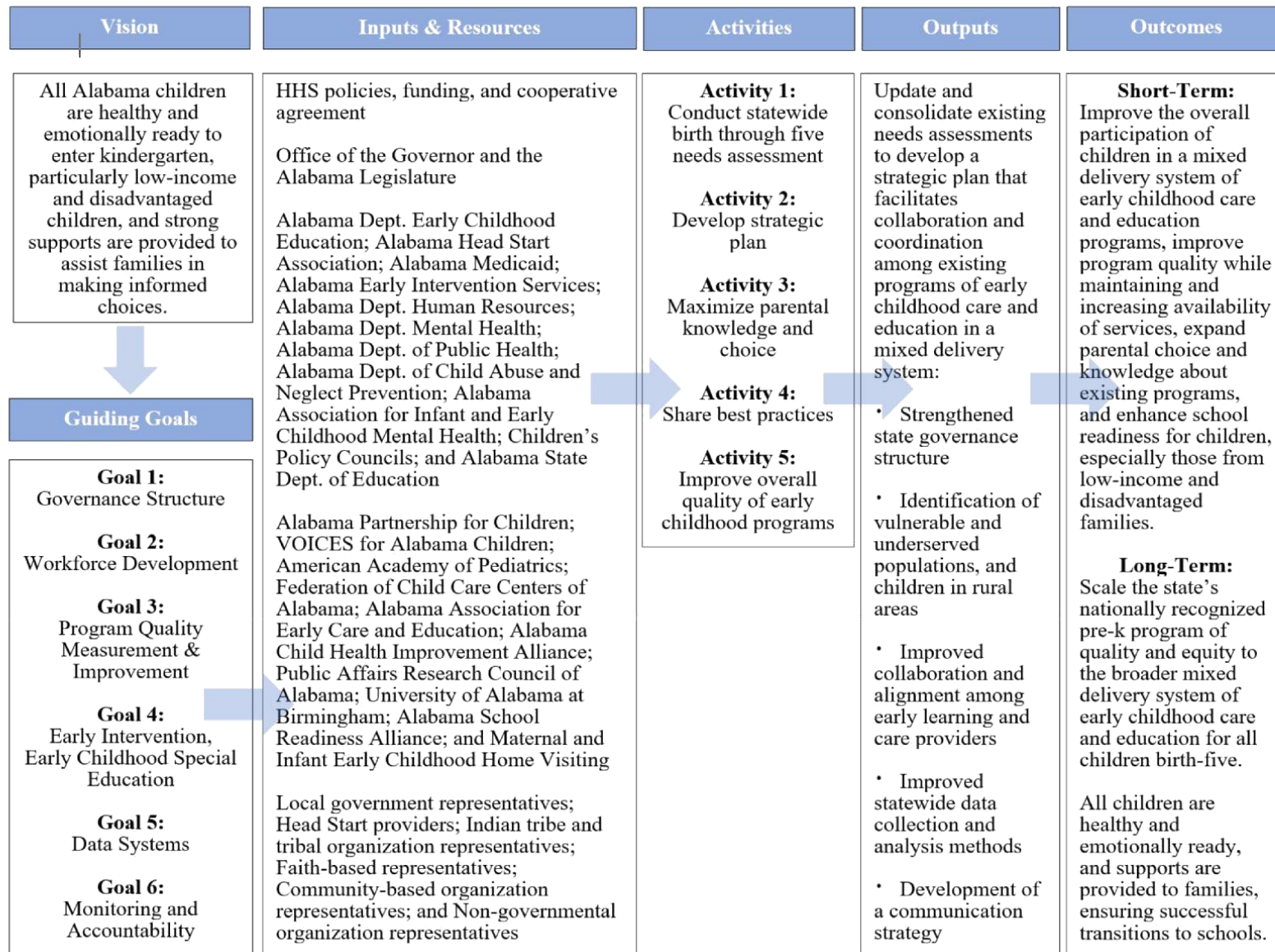
**Evaluation/Reporting and Dissemination for Preschool Development Birth-5 Systems Grant**

- Evaluation of program to support grant activities, measure progress toward meeting goals and objectives, visually depict the birth-5 system as it expands over time, and support dissemination
- Finalize and implement dissemination plan in collaboration with DECE and other state partners

**Birth to 5 Systems Evaluation Research (including First Class Pre-K, Integrated Approach to Early Learning, and other Birth-5 systems initiatives)**

- Support ongoing, comprehensive evaluation research through a mixed methods approach implemented by a multi-disciplinary Research Evaluation Team
- Prepare and disseminate findings through various methods that target specific audiences and stakeholders, including families, state and local leaders, providers, and policy-makers

PDG B-5: Alabama Connections for Early Care and Education



## **Sustainability Plan**

The State of Alabama has a history of strong investment in early childhood education through the state's nationally recognized state funded voluntary pre-k program, First Class Pre-K, Head Start, First Teacher Home Visiting, and Alabama's Integrated Approach to Early Learning. The broad base of support from the public, private and non-profit sectors mobilized to advocate for quality early childhood programs, and as a result, the Governor and Legislature have worked together to increase DECE funding by nearly \$100 million since 2011. These state funds provide the foundation for the programs and have been complemented by Preschool Development Grant funds that have helped investments in the establishment of new programs.

DECE has a history of ensuring that federal funds are used to make one-time investments to establish programs which can then be sustained with State funds. Additionally, DECE has a history of partnerships with the DHR Childcare Division (i.e. CCDF, EHS/CCP grants) to improve the quality of and support childcare throughout the State. Such partnerships will be enhanced by the PDG B-5 funds as the partnership continues.

The work plan of DECE is to enhance, establish or revise efforts of cooperation and collaboration. The PDG B-5 funds will be used only for those costs associated with the one-time expenditures required to accomplish or enhance these tasks. Currently, less than one percent of state funds are used for DECE administration. Coordinated funds will support enhanced early childhood systems by continued growth in such funds to sustain all efforts of the PDG B-5.

In summary, the statewide collaborative efforts and partnerships support ongoing efforts through direct intervention and policy development that promote sustainability of system improvements. DECE is a cabinet-level agency and is assigned administrative responsibility for leadership, coordination, and implementation of state and local initiatives related to the early

childhood system. This structure supports financial and programmatic sustainability and leadership continuity beyond the period of federal funding. Further, the expertise gained in facilitating collaborative initiatives and implementing continuous quality improvement exercises will support the spread of lessons learned beyond the communities of focus for this project. The establishment of a set of common measurable indicators, with integration into the under-development SLDS, will provide an opportunity to measure the outcomes of collective impact over time. The innovative mixed delivery system will promote adaptation and adoption more broadly throughout the state to improve children's health and family well-being and will support the sustainability of PDG B-5.

### **Dissemination Plan**

The dissemination plan will be guided by DECE leadership, with input from the stakeholder advisory group ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee and support from the Research Evaluation team established through the previous PDG grant. Activities will tie closely with both project implementation and overall evaluation efforts.

The overall goal for the dissemination plan is to provide timely information about the Alabama PDG B-5 grant, early childhood system expansion, and child outcomes to key audiences, including families, system providers, higher education representatives, state and local leaders, policy-makers, and other stakeholders. Four objectives with associated strategies and evaluation methods are presented below. The plan will be finalized with input from federal technical assistance and the ECAC.

*Dissemination Plan Objective 1:* By the end of the first quarter of the first year of the grant, utilize the ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee to guide grant activities and support dissemination.



<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Evaluation Method/Measure</b>
Stakeholder advisory group, ECAC, will guide grant activities in addressing needs and gaps identified through the needs assessment. This group will include representatives from key stakeholders and target audiences. The group will respond to progress updates, provide feedback on dissemination materials/strategies, and help facilitate broad dissemination of findings.	Compliance group established  Membership list
Hold quarterly meetings of ECAC, assuring that at least one agenda item for each meeting is related to dissemination (target audience identification, input on methods/materials, response to dissemination materials)	Meeting agenda and minutes, including attendees and recommendations

*Dissemination Plan Objective 2:* By the end of the first year of the grant, finalize and implement thereafter a method of identifying and engaging key stakeholders and target audiences.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Evaluation Method/Measure</b>
Develop a preliminary list of target audiences based on input from the stakeholder advisory group members and members of other relevant taskforces and committees. Target audiences will include: education community (early childhood, K-12, higher education/workforce), state agencies (ADPH, DHR, DECE, ADMH, AEIS), families/parents, local community, external organizations, etc.	List of target audiences
Create a preliminary list of partners and community members to provide quarterly updates from the stakeholder advisory group and other project activities, evaluation findings, dissemination products, and notices of new materials posted on the DECE website. This will include membership of the target audiences listed above and other interested persons can opt-in for email updates via a link on the DECE website. (This membership list will become a preliminary sample for annual surveys to capture input on the project, dissemination products, and use of findings.)	Membership list for email updates  # and copies of updates
ECAC bi-annual meetings will be used to engage stakeholders who share a vested interest in collaborating and coordinating to strengthen existing programs and structures to deliver high-quality, mixed-delivery early childhood services in Alabama. In addition to engagement and updates, this will also provide an opportunity to gather overall recommendations and support dissemination. The Research Evaluation team will work with DECE and the ECAC to establish a method of capturing and archiving ECAC presentations, materials, and recommendations to support overall evaluation and evaluation of dissemination activities. At minimum, a survey will be completed by attendees.	ECAC agenda, presentations, and materials  Survey results from ECAC participants

*Dissemination Plan Objective 3:* During each year of the grant, disseminate project information and updates via at least 3 methods.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Evaluation Method/Measure</b>
An annual evaluation report (and final summative report) will be completed each year to supplement required federal reporting. In addition to B-5 system changes, numbers and demographics, and overall outcomes, this report will include lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations to inform the overall grant project strategic plan.	Evaluation reports (Internal use and posted on DECE website)
Based on ongoing evaluation, a slide presentation will be developed and will be shared with the stakeholder advisory group and the broader partner list, as well as incorporated into the Secretary's legislative presentation/testimony to be delivered to state policy-makers and the Governor.	# and copies of presentations
The Research Evaluation Team will prepare a white paper or series of stand-alone issue briefs that present key findings from the PDG B-5 grant in digestible portions. This strategy has been implemented with other findings related to the First Class Pre-K program and the format has been well-received as a way to present and share scholarly findings in easy-to-understand short reports for use with external stakeholders, including state and community partners and state legislators. These issue briefs will also be posted on the DECE website.	# of issue briefs posted on DECE website
The baseline B5 system has been visually depicted via Arc GIS mapping as a part of the project needs assessment. These maps, along with baseline maps from the annual First Class Pre-K maps establish a baseline view of the B5 early childhood system in Alabama. These maps will be updated annually, with previous iterations archived, to visually depict system expansion as well as to support stakeholder use in locating programs. Current maps will be posted on the DECE website.	Baseline and annual Arc GIS B5 system maps  Current maps posted on DECE website
The Research Evaluation team will prepare and submit abstracts for consideration as poster or oral sessions at relevant conferences. These will be co-presented by DECE leadership and Research Evaluation team members. Posters will be posted on the DECE website.	# and copies of posters posted on DECE website # presentation sessions
The Research Evaluation team will prepare articles for consideration for publication in relevant peer-reviewed journals to add to the body of literature related to B5 systems. These articles will be co-authored by DECE leadership. Articles will be posted on the DECE website.	# and copies of articles posted on DECE website

*Dissemination Plan Objective 4:* During each year of the grant, evaluate the extent to which target audiences have received project information and have used it as intended.

Strategy	Evaluation Method/Measure
Solicit feedback on dissemination materials and use from ECAC members. This may be done more informally as a meeting agenda item with the feedback recorded in the minutes or through a brief electronic survey.	Meeting minutes  Brief member survey results
Develop, implement, and analyze an annual electronic survey of B5 early childhood stakeholders, including ECAC members, and representatives from the target audience list and broader interested persons/partners list (see objective 2 strategies). To support triangulation of findings and minimize duplication, select questions from this survey will also be used in other relevant surveys fielded by DECE and partner organizations as appropriate. The purpose of the annual surveys is to capture input on the project, dissemination products, and use of findings. Findings will guide strategic planning and project implementation.	Survey results and report
Monitor available metrics on audience engagement, product usage, and evaluation of presentations/sessions.	DECE website related page views  # cross-postings or link to B5 materials on partner websites  # of members on lists to receive updates  # of product downloads (issue briefs, papers)  Conference session presentation evaluations

### **Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds**

DECE employs a full-time Education Systems Administrator (ESA) and a full-time Technology Assistant (TA). These employees directly oversee the organization's data collection and management. The ESA has early childhood teaching and administrative experience, certifications, and degrees as well as a CompTia Network+ certification and experience as an educational

technology director. In addition, DECE contracts with PARCA and UAB for support in conducting formalized research, data analysis, and data-based action planning. This team and DECE administrators have regular Research and Evaluation Meetings for data review, disaggregation, analysis, and both short- and long-range planning.

Student assessment data is collected from multiple sources including the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and Teaching Strategies GOLD. Classroom observation data is collected through the CLASS tool. Phase II of the development of the ECEDData central database, which is slated to begin in November 2018, is centered around the integration of the data from the PPVT, GOLD, and CLASS tools into the DECE central database.

DECE has developed and maintains a comprehensive statewide data collection and management system. Student and parent data is captured electronically through the ASAP online registration system. Teacher and classroom data is also captured digitally through electronic forms which are compiled into a comprehensive dataset. All this data is fed directly through nightly digital transfers into the DECE central database, ECEDData, which is housed at the datacenter belonging to the state of Alabama's Office of Information Technology. The ECEDData central database makes all student, parent, teacher, and classroom data available to all DECE administrators, monitors, and coaches from anywhere at any time via any internet-connected device through a credential-protected web interface.

For the purposes of longitudinal data analysis, the DECE central database is linked with the student information management system utilized by the ALSDE. This platform, iNow by PowerSchool, allows pre-k students to be assigned unique State Student Identification Numbers (SSIDs) which remain the same as students enter public school in the state. Through capture of the SSIDs, DECE is able to follow the data of students who participated in the department's program

all the way through high school graduation. In addition, DECE is collaborating with the State to build a Statewide Longitudinal Data System which will allow the capture of data to extend into higher education and the workforce.

**Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Silos among Early Childhood Care and**

**Education Providers.** Alabama is aware that, despite concerted efforts on many levels, silos among early childhood care and education partners and providers currently exist in some areas. These silos can exist across geographic areas and areas of expertise or focus. To overcome this challenge, Alabama proposes a qualitative data collection process focused on a robust stakeholder engagement as a central component of the needs assessment process. This stakeholder engagement process will bring together key partners and providers across geographic and focus areas, thereby continuing to break down silos and barriers where they may exist. The communication and intentionality behind this process, supported and guided by the collaborative, cross-sector ECAC/PDG B-5 Committee, will support Alabama's efforts to address the challenge of maximizing partnership opportunities.

**Potential Challenge and Proposed Strategy: Lack of Data in Underserved and Rural**

**Communities.** Identifying reliable, meaningful data about the birth through five population in Alabama can be a challenge, especially in underserved and rural communities. As a state with a significant number of rural communities, Alabama anticipates encountering this challenge in conducting a statewide needs assessment. To address this challenge, DECE will work with agencies and partners across the state to identify existing data, identify where there are gaps in the data, and develop strategies to fill these gaps in data in the future. Alabama will also look at best practices from other states that have encountered this challenge to identify strategies and use data, especially relating to underserved and rural communities.

**PDG B-5****Year One - 2019****Request Total: \$14,431,638.86****State Matching  
Amount: \$68,510,452.89****A. Personnel Total Requested****\$862,278.77**

Position/ Title	Months	% Effort	Annual Salary	Amount		
				Wage Rate Per Month	Requested from Grant	Matching Funds - State
Senior Director - Project Director	12	30%	\$110,080.98	\$9,173.42	\$33,024.29	\$23,117.01
Education Administrator - Project Manager	12	100%	\$92,340.00	\$7,695.00	\$92,340.00	\$0.00
Secretary of Early Childhood Education	12	30%	\$149,654.40	\$12,471.20	\$44,896.32	\$13,468.90
Education Administrator - Regional Directors	12	30%	\$68,544.23	\$5,712.02	\$20,563.27	\$14,394.29
	12	30%	\$75,492.00	\$6,291.00	\$22,647.60	\$15,853.32
	12	30%	\$71,031.69	\$5,919.31	\$21,309.51	\$14,916.65
	12	30%	\$75,649.50	\$6,304.13	\$22,694.85	\$15,886.40
	12	30%	\$68,701.73	\$5,725.14	\$20,610.52	\$14,427.36
	12	30%	\$72,253.17	\$6,021.10	\$21,675.95	\$15,173.17
	12	30%	\$75,025.80	\$6,252.15	\$22,507.74	\$15,755.42
	12	30%	\$59,377.25	\$4,948.10	\$17,813.18	\$12,469.22

[illegible]

	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
	12	50%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$15,500.00	\$10,850.00
Human Services Program Manager - Administrative Services	12	30%	\$50,233.77	\$4,186.15	\$15,070.13	\$4,521.04
Human Services Program Manager - Children's Policy Council Mgr	12	30%	\$61,427.56	\$5,118.96	\$18,428.27	\$12,899.79
Senior Accountant	12	30%	\$61,516.34	\$5,126.36	\$18,454.90	\$5,536.47
Accountant	12	30%	\$46,419.48	\$3,868.29	\$13,925.84	\$4,177.75
	12	30%	\$44,270.51	\$3,689.21	\$13,281.15	\$3,984.35
Retired State Employee - Accountant (.5 FTE, part-time)	12	30%	\$31,000.00	\$2,583.33	\$9,300.00	\$2,790.00
Administrative Services Associate II	12	30%	\$31,528.60	\$2,627.38	\$9,458.58	\$2,837.57
	12	30%	\$24,525.99	\$2,043.83	\$7,357.80	\$2,207.34
Education Administrator - Budget and Grants Analyst (.5 FTE, part-time)	12	30%	\$41,944.01	\$3,495.33	\$12,583.20	\$3,774.96



**STATE  
MATCH            \$435,703.69**

Budget Narrative - Personnel

Request:

The Senior Director of DECE will serve as the Project Director and will supervise a newly created position of Project Manager in order to sustain the efforts of the grant beyond the first year. The Project Manager will be hired into the classification of Education Administrator in accordance with the procedures and qualifications established by the State of Alabama Personnel Department. The Secretary of Early Childhood Education will be engaged in developing partnerships necessary for the successful systems building. The Secretary serves as the Chair of the State Children's Policy Council. The eight Regional Directors are the implementation managers throughout the state for efforts coming out of DECE. The Early Childhood Systems Administrator has primary responsibility for creating and partnering with other agencies for data systems regarding children and teachers in early childhood classrooms. The Data and Analytics Manager and the Grants Manager administer the grants program which distributes funds throughout Alabama for early childhood programs. The P-3 Administrator is responsible for partnerships involving assessment of children and alignment of programs serving children in preschool through third grade. The Executive Secretary provides scheduling and support for the Secretary of DECE. The Professional Development Manager administers early learning training and coaching support for the state pre-kindergarten program. The Director of Early Learning is primarily responsible for interagency partnerships supporting childcare and preschool. DECE worked with the State Personnel Department to create an innovative way to utilize experienced teachers as coaches and has employed such teachers to provide specialized and experienced coaching in early childhood settings. The Human Services Program Manager of Administrative Services ensures that department resources and equipment are efficiently and effectively utilized and monitored. This position also serves as liaison to state policy and administration. The Human Services Program Manager for Children's Policy Councils works with all local CPC's as well as the state CPC. Accounting staff are vital to the effective use of state and federal funds and support all activities of DECE. The Budget and Grants analyst is part of the accounting function.

**B. Fringe Benefits Total**

**Requested \$249,164.00**

Description	Requested from Grant	State Matching Funds
FICA	\$65,965.00	\$19,789.50

Retirement Systems of Alabama	\$87,455.00	\$26,236.50
Health Insurance	\$95,744.00	\$28,723.20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	
	<b>STATE</b>	
	<b>MATCH</b>	<b>\$74,749.20</b>

Budget Narrative - Fringe Benefits Request

The percentage of fringe benefits requested from this grant is equal to the percentage of salary requested in the Personnel section above. FICA is a fixed 7.65% of salary. State agencies including DECE are required to participate in the Retirement Systems of Alabama. Depending on the date of hire, employer contributions are either 14.51% or 14.14% of an employee's salary. Agency contributions for health insurance are equal to \$930 per employee per month.

**C. Travel Total Requested** **\$10,000.00**

Description	Amount Requested
ACF Sponsored Grantee Meeting for 4 participants	\$10,000

Budget Narrative - Travel

This item is for four people to attend a 3 day ACF sponsored grantee meeting out of state. Expenses include \$2500 per person. Estimates of expenses include \$700 for airfare and baggage fees, \$1000 for overnight accommodations, \$400 for per diem, and \$400 for other transportation costs to include transit and airport parking.

**D. Equipment** **\$51,000.00**

Description	Amount Requested
Laptop, iPad and iPhone for 17 staff members	\$51,000.00

Budget Narrative - Equipment

Early childhood coaches will be provided needed technology to assist program staff and directors to communicate effectively, to collaborate with partner agencies and staff, and to maintain records and data for program operations. Each staff member will be provided with a laptop, iPad, and iPhone at a cost of \$3,000 per employee.

**E. Supplies** **\$91,000.00**

Description	Amount	Units	# Units	Amount Requested
Consumable supplies for regional and statewide meetings	\$10.00	per person, per meeting	600	\$6,000.00
Gasoline/ fuel for travel	\$3,000.00	per car	17	\$51,000.00
Car repairs and maintenance	\$2,000.00	per car	17	\$34,000.00

Budget Narrative - Supplies

Fuel for agency provided vehicles enables early childhood coaches to travel as needed for on-site support and collaboration. Up to \$250 per month per coach and project manager is budgeted for each of the twelve months. Regional and statewide meetings provide networking opportunities, professional development and data analysis in a group setting. All day meetings and evening meetings often necessitate meals for participants.

**F. Contractual total requested** **\$13,003,000.00**

Grant Function	Amount Requested	State Matching Funds
Activity 1: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan	\$315,000.00	

Activity 2: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan	\$88,000.00	
Activity 3: Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Choice	\$5,500,000.00	
Activity 4: Sharing Best Practices	\$5,500,000.00	
Program Performance Evaluation	\$1,350,000.00	
Activities	\$250,000.00	
		<b>TOTAL</b>
		<b>STATE</b>
		<b>MATCH      \$68,000,000.00</b>

Budget Narrative - Contractual

DECE will follow state purchasing requirements in the procurement of services. Alabama plans to invest approximately \$315,000 to conduct a birth through five statewide needs assessment. This funding will be used for meeting materials and technical assistance from an external consultant to add capacity, expertise, and project management services to the process described in the "B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Scope of Work and Work Plan." Alabama plans to invest \$88,000 on developing a birth through five statewide strategic plan. This funding will be used for meeting materials and technical

assistance from an external consultant to add capacity, expertise, and project management services to the strategic planning process. The expenditures in Activity 3 (\$5,500,000) will be used to subgrant the funds for projects in support of maximizing parent knowledge and choice. Examples of such programs include, but are not limited to the following: a mental health mobile unit; culturally responsive leadership training; and a superintendent's roundtable. The expenditures in Activity 4 (\$5,500,000) will be used to subgrant funds for projects in support of sharing best practices and include, but are not limited to, the following: a leadership academy for administrators to support school systems; online professional development modules; expansion of the online learning management system administered by First Five Alabama; expansion of TEACH scholarship program; financial incentives to institutions of higher education to pursue NAEYC accreditation; and provide stipends to attract qualified professors; partner with ALSDE Career Tech program to bring the national CDA credential to high school students; and utilize data to scale the successful Alabama Reflective Coaching Model. The program performance evaluation expenditure includes \$350,000 for program evaluation through the University of Alabama in Birmingham and \$1,000,000 for the expansion of the data system to follow student progress from early childhood through at least secondary education. The technical assistance will be contracted through national technical assistance providers with expertise in the requirements of the grant. The state matching amount is the amount of funds provided to the diverse delivery system of pre-kindergarten in Alabama. The state will actually grant a larger amount during 2018-19, but \$68,000,000 is the amount paid to sites in 2017-18.

#### **G. Other**

**\$34,935.00**

Description	Amount	Unit	# Units	Amount Requested
Per Diem	\$12.75	day	340	\$4,335.00
Overnight Per Diem	\$100	day	306	\$30,600

#### Budget Narrative - Other

Project staff will be expected to travel statewide in support of the collaborative work of the grant. Per diem estimate is 20 days per year per field staff member. Overnight travel estimate is 2 nights per month for 6 months for each of the 17 field staff members.

#### **H. Indirect Charges**

**\$130,261.09**

Indirect charges are based on the federally approved indirect cost rate for DECE of 11.72% based on salary and benefits.

**STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS RATE AGREEMENT**

EIN: 63-6000619

DATE: 06/29/2015

**ORGANIZATION:**

Alabama Department of Children's Affairs  
135 South Union St, Suite 215  
Montgomery, AL 36104

FILING REF.: The preceding  
agreement was dated  
09/24/2014

The rates approved in this agreement are for use on grants, contracts and other agreements with the Federal Government, subject to the conditions in Section III.

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**SECTION I: INDIRECT COST RATES**

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RATE TYPES:      FIXED                  FINAL                  PROV. (PROVISIONAL)      PRED. (PREDETERMINED)

EFFECTIVE PERIOD

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>RATE(%)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>APPLICABLE TO</u>
FINAL	10/01/2013	09/30/2014	11.72	All	All Programs
PRED.	10/01/2014	09/30/2016	11.72	All	All Programs
PROV.	10/01/2016	09/30/2018	11.72	All	All Programs

\*BASE

Direct salaries and wages including all fringe benefits.

ORGANIZATION: Alabama Department of Children's Affairs

AGREEMENT DATE: 6/29/2015

### SECTION III: GENERAL

#### A. LIMITATIONS:

The rates in this Agreement are subject to any statutory or administrative limitations and apply to a given grant, contract or other agreement only to the extent that funds are available. Acceptance of the rates is subject to the following conditions: (1) Only costs incurred by the organization were included in its indirect cost pool as finally accepted; such costs are legal obligations of the organization and are allowable under the governing cost principles; (2) The same costs that have been treated as indirect costs are not claimed as direct costs; (3) Similar types of costs have been accorded consistent accounting treatment; and (4) The information provided by the organization which was used to establish the rates is not later found to be materially incomplete or inaccurate by the Federal Government. In such situations the rate(s) would be subject to renegotiation at the discretion of the Federal Government.

#### B. ACCOUNTING CHANGES:

This Agreement is based on the accounting system purported by the organization to be in effect during the Agreement period. Changes to the method of accounting for costs which affect the amount of reimbursement resulting from the use of this Agreement require prior approval of the authorized representative of the cognizant agency. Such changes include, but are not limited to, changes in the charging of a particular type of cost from indirect to direct. Failure to obtain approval may result in cost disallowances.

#### C. FIXED RATES:

If a fixed rate is in this Agreement, it is based on an estimate of the costs for the period covered by the rate. When the actual costs for this period are determined, an adjustment will be made to a rate of a future year(s) to compensate for the difference between the costs used to establish the fixed rate and actual costs.

#### D. USE BY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES:

The rates in this Agreement were approved in accordance with the authority in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200 (2 CFR 200), and should be applied to grants, contracts and other agreements covered by 2 CFR 200, subject to any limitations in A above. The organization may provide copies of the Agreement to other Federal Agencies to give them early notification of the Agreement.

#### E. OTHER:

If any Federal contract, grant or other agreement is reimbursing indirect costs by a means other than the approved rate(s) in this Agreement, the organization should (1) credit such costs to the affected programs, and (2) apply the approved rate(s) to the appropriate base to identify the proper amount of indirect costs allocable to these programs.

BY THE INSTITUTION:

Alabama Department of Children's Affairs

(INSTITUTION)

(SIGNATURE)

(NAME)

(TITLE)

(DATE)

ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

(AGENCY)

Arif M. Karim -S

Digitally signed by Arif M. Karim -S  
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=HHS, ou=OSC,  
ou=People, cn=Arif M. Karim -S,  
0.9.2342.19200900.100.1.1=205021205  
Date: 2015.07.02 13:22:14 -0500

(SIGNATURE)

Arif Karim

(NAME)

Director, Cost Allocation Services

(TITLE)

6/29/2015

(DATE) 7576

HHS REPRESENTATIVE:

June Talbert

Telephone:

(214) 767-3261