



# State of Illinois

Preschool Development Grant-Expansion Grant  
Application for Initial Funding



**Office of Governor Pat Quinn**  
October 10, 2014

**CFDA Number 84.419b**



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

**Pat Quinn**  
GOVERNOR

October 7, 2014

Secretary Arne Duncan  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

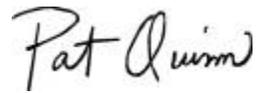
On behalf of the State of Illinois, I am pleased to submit the enclosed proposal for a Preschool Development Grant Program – Expansion Grant. In order to ensure that Illinoisans are well-prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, I have set a goal of increasing the proportion of Illinois residents with a college degree or workforce certificate to 60% by 2025. Reaching this goal will not be possible without a strong start for Illinois children so I thank you for providing this opportunity to expand access to high quality early learning.

Illinois has long been a leader in early childhood and under my administration we have made unprecedented progress to strengthen our state's early learning and development system. As a part of my Illinois Jobs Now! capital program, we launched the nation's largest investment in early childhood facilities by providing \$50,000,000 in construction grants to high need communities across the state to build and renovate early childhood spaces and expand access to early learning. As an awardee of the Early Learning Challenge program, Illinois has developed a statewide, cross-sector early childhood quality rating and improvement system to drive quality improvement across programs. Moreover, as a part of my signature Birth to Five Initiative, Illinois has expanded evidence based home visiting programs and prioritized family support services including prenatal care.

I recognize the importance of early education as the cornerstone for not only individual educational achievement but for the long term economic prosperity of our state and nation. I remain committed to working with the Department, state legislators, and Illinois' early learning community to continue to improve early childhood

opportunities for our youngest learners. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to continuing to partner in supporting student success from cradle to career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "P" and "Q".

*Pat Quinn*  
**Governor**

## Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Background Information for Reviewers: Illinois' Demographics and Geography.....  | 5   |
| A. Executive Summary Illinois' Ambitious and Achievable Plan for Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs ..... | 8   |
| C. Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs .....  | 31  |
| D. Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community.....  | 57  |
| E. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships .....   | 73  |
| F. Alignment within a Birth through Third Grade Continuum .....  | 94  |
| Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds.....  | 104 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting a Continuum of Early Learning and Development .....                          | 105 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High-Quality Preschool Program Slots .....                                 | 114 |
| G. Budget and Sustainability .....   | 114 |

## **Background Information for Reviewers: Illinois' Demographics and Geography**

Illinois has the fifth largest population in the United States, at just fewer than 13 million people. There are approximately 170,000 four-year-old children, and over 68,000 of these are in families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and are therefore eligible for the Preschool Development Grant-Expansion Grant program. Approximately 16,500 four-year-old children (nearly 10%) are in families in extreme poverty, with incomes below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level. Estimating the number of children who face a combination of multiple risks to their healthy development (e.g., low parental education, single parent household, low birth weight, parental mental illness, etc.) is difficult given the manner in which population-level data is typically collected and reported, but based on the best evidence available, the State estimates that 20-25% of Illinois children under age five experience three or more significant risk factors. Research shows that these children are especially in need of high-quality early learning and comprehensive services if they are to be prepared to succeed when they enter kindergarten.

The ethnic and racial make-up of Illinois' population largely mirrors that of the nation as a whole. Approximately 15% of the population is African-American, 5% is Asian, 2% is two or more races, and 16.5% is Latino. The state does not have any tribal lands, and its population of American Indians is less than 1%. As with the national population, young children in Illinois are more likely than older residents to be Latino; approximately one in four children under age five in the state is Latino.

Illinois's population is heavily concentrated around the Chicago metropolitan region. The following table shows the percentage of the state's total population of children under five, and the percentage of the state's poor children (income under 100% of the federal poverty level) who live in the Chicago metropolitan area, in other smaller metropolitan areas around the state, and in rural counties.

|   | Total Population | Children in Poverty |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| City of Chicago                                 | 23%              | 32%                 |
| Surrounding suburbs/greater Chicago metro. area | 42%              | 31%                 |
| Other counties w/cities larger than 20,000      | 23%              | 24%                 |
| Rural counties (no city larger than 20,000)     | 13%              | 13%                 |

As is true throughout the country, Illinois’ suburbs have experienced a dramatic rise in poverty over the past 10-15 years. While children in the suburban counties are still less likely to be poor than children in the City of Chicago, the number of young children in poverty in the suburbs has nearly doubled since 2000, while growing less than 5% in the City of Chicago during that period. As a result of this rapid demographic shift, the suburbs are especially lacking in high-quality, affordable, early learning and comprehensive services for young children and their families.

Illinois is a fairly large state geographically, stretching approximately 390 miles from north to south and 210 miles from east to west. It has 102 counties, and about 750 school districts that serve children either K-8 or K-12.

Unlike many states, Illinois does not have a county-based system of either social services or education. Child care assistance, state preschool funding, early intervention funding, and other relevant services are funded at the local level directly by the state without any county-level pass-through. Therefore there is a significant need to support greater local-level coordination of early childhood services.

**Glossary:** A glossary of terms used in the application, including names of State agencies and programs, is included in Appendix on page 3.

**Key Acronyms:**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| CCAP    | Child Care Assistance Program                       |
| DCFS    | Illinois Department of Children and Family Services |
| ECBG    | Early Childhood Block Grant                         |
| ELC     | Illinois Early Learning Council                     |
| IDHS    | Illinois Department of Human Services               |
| IELDS   | Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards   |
| ISBE    | Illinois State Board of Education                   |
| OECD    | Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development    |
| PFA     | Preschool for All                                   |
| RTT-ELC | Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge            |
| SFY     | State Fiscal Year                                   |

## **A. Executive Summary Illinois' Ambitious and Achievable Plan for Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs**

### Introduction

Illinois is regarded as the national leader in its comprehensive support for children starting at birth through kindergarten entry and beyond. It has long embraced early childhood intervention as a powerful way to ensure the healthy development of its most at-risk populations and to close the achievement gap prior to kindergarten entry. Over the course of three decades of resource development and cross-system work by its public-private partnerships, the State has developed a compelling, common vision of the universal supports that every child and family *should* receive, as well as the targeted supports that the most vulnerable children and their families *must* receive to ensure they arrive at school safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed. This vision is deeply informed by the research of many different disciplines and identifies both the early experiences that contribute most to success in school and later life and the strategies that ensure children truly benefit from those experiences.

The proposed Preschool Expansion Grant will support the next steps in implementing this vision, guiding communities to identify the highest need children and families – those with multiple risk factors – and to serve them with the more intensive and comprehensive services they need, within the context of birth-to-third-grade community systems.

Illinois has a long history of innovation, national leadership, and investments in supporting comprehensive early learning and development programs beginning from birth, including:

- **First state** to pass legislation which authorized universal high-quality preschool for both three and four year olds (2006)
- **One of only a few** states that has fully integrated school-based state-funded preschool programs into its Quality Rating and Improvement System (2013)
- **First state** to extend its definition of “children of limited English-speaking ability” to include 3- and 4-year olds participating in State-funded preschool

programs, thereby requiring school districts to provide them bilingual education services (2009)

- **One of only a few** states that has defined its principal endorsement as “Preschool to grade 12,” requiring principal candidates to receive coursework and training specifically in early learning and development
- **First state** to establish a statutory set-aside to fund services for children from birth to age three, irrevocably attaching the hard science of brain development to the state’s vision for education funding (1997)
- **The nation's largest ever** state commitment to the renovation or construction of early childhood facilities in a single state capital budget (2010)
- **First state** to make health insurance available to all children regardless of family income (2006)
- **Two decades** of investment in research-based home visiting programs and a statewide training system for staff in these programs
- **Exceptional investment** in the child care subsidy system, including a network of Child Care Resource & Referral agencies and a nationally recognized, comprehensive professional development system for practitioners
- **National leader in supporting inclusive practice** for children with disabilities, with 15% of children in Preschool for All programs having IEPs.
- **One of the first states** to adopt the new WIDA E-ELD and E-SLD (Early English and Spanish Language Development) standards for young English Learners; these standards align with the WIDA K-12 standards for English language development that the State has already adopted and will be integrated into the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS). These standards have been adopted in rule by the State Board of Education and are pending regulatory publication.
- **First state** to develop and implement Social-Emotional Learning Standards across early childhood and K-12, and leader in developing mental health consultation models to support all types of early childhood programs, including home visiting, Early Intervention, child care, and state-funded preschool.

In Illinois, early learning and development programs enjoy strong support across the political spectrum and have grown under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Support also spans across the public and private sectors, as the Illinois early learning and development system has benefitted for decades from strong public-private partnerships and significant philanthropic support.

*Illinois' Ambitious and Achievable Plan for Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs*

*(1) The State's Progress to Date*

Illinois is prepared to build upon this solid early learning foundation to implement a very ambitious plan to expand High-Quality Preschool to children with high needs in the context of a comprehensive plan to increase services for young children from birth through third grade.

In 2006, the Illinois General Assembly approved **Preschool For All (PFA)** making Illinois the **first state in the nation** to authorize and support voluntary, high-quality PFA for **three and four year olds**. PFA grants are available to public school districts, private schools, child care centers, and other community-based organizations, and currently serve over 75,000 young children. The hallmark of PFA is its emphasis on quality. Bachelors-level teachers are required to have State Professional Educator Licenses with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education and classrooms also have a qualified aide. Screening, assessment, and curriculum are aligned with IELDS. (See Appendix on page 8). While most slots are part day (minimum 2.5 hours/day, five days a week), about 25% of the slots statewide (especially in Chicago and other urban centers) are part of full-day, full-year child care programs. Illinois has no waiting list for Child Care Assistance (subsidy) and blending and braiding of funding is encouraged to ensure that children receive high-quality education and care while their parents work or attend school or training. Illinois has explicitly tied the growth of the State's system of supports for infants and toddlers to the growth of Preschool for All through a statutory set-aside in the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) for the birth-to-three focused Prevention Initiative. By current statute (updated in July 2014), this set-aside amount will rise

from its current level of 14% to 20% in the next year that state resources are provided for expanded PFA slots. This commitment underscores the birth-to-five approach that Illinois has taken and plans to continue to take toward funding early learning and development services.

In January 2014, the Executive Committee of the Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) articulated a strategic vision for the continued growth of Illinois' early learning system. While recognizing the substantial success the State has had in implementing and scaling-up high-quality preschool and birth-to-three services, the ELC had been concerned for several years by evidence that those young children who have the highest needs—those in families with multiple challenges—were still not receiving services that were intensive and continuous enough to ensure that these children will be well prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond. Indeed, there was significant evidence that programs were struggling to enroll and retain children with very high needs, such as children whose parents are unemployed, have very low education levels, have incomes below the poverty level, are homeless, are recent immigrants or refugees, and/or have a disability or substance abuse issue. Analysis by the ELC's All Families Served Subcommittee, as well as pilot projects focused on engaging "hard-to-reach" children and families conducted using the State's State Advisory Council grant, established that Illinois' PFA model, which is typically half-day and which provides only limited parent engagement services, was not effectively meeting the needs of those children and families with the highest needs. The Committee concluded that the State needed to develop and implement a more intensive option for PFA programs that would be targeted to those children with the highest needs and that would be part of a well-coordinated continuum of intensive, high-quality services from birth to kindergarten in every high-need community.

In February 2014, the full ELC endorsed the Executive Committee's strategic directive that, while the State remains committed to its vision of ensuring that all children receive the early learning and development supports they need, "As we move toward achieving our vision, we will emphasize increasing access to highly intensive and effective services for the most at-risk children, those with multiple high-needs characteristics."

In his “State of the State” address in February, Governor Pat Quinn spoke at great length about the importance of dramatically expanding access to high-quality early learning services, especially for children with high needs. He noted, “When the human brain is forming early in a child’s life, it provides a critical window of opportunity to develop key academic, social, and cognitive skills that will determine success in school and in life.” He reminded the General Assembly, “Study after study has shown that high-quality early childhood education provides the best return of any public investment we can make.” He then called for a bold new Birth to Five Initiative that would focus investment on ensuring all pregnant women receive prenatal care, all children have access to quality early learning opportunities, and all parents are supported as children’s first teachers. The Governor’s five year budget blueprint released in April calls for \$1.5 billion in new investments in the Birth to Five Initiative, including increases in Child Care Assistance, Early Intervention (IDEA Part C), home visiting programs, outreach and support for pregnant women, as well as increases in the ECBG PFA and Prevention Initiative programs. The Birth to Five Initiative blueprint calls for annual increases in the ECBG of \$50 million each year, of which a substantial portion will be designated to implement and expand within the overall PFA program a new full-day, comprehensive program option for children with very high needs called More at Four. More at Four will meet the federal definition of High-Quality Preschool, and the State’s investment in More at Four will constitute the State’s match to the federal Preschool Development Grant-Expansion Grant funds. (See ISBE Approval of State Plan, Appendix on page 29.)

**Birth to Five Initiative:  
Illinois' Planned Increased State Investments  
in the Early Childhood Block Grant  
SFY 2016-2020**

|        | <b>Increase above SFY 15</b> |               |                         |                                |
|--------|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
|        | Total ECGB<br>increase       | More at Four  | Other PFA<br>expansion* | Prevention<br>Initiative (0-3) |
| SFY 16 | \$50,000,000                 | \$1,660,000   | \$30,000,000            | \$18,340,000                   |
| SFY 17 | \$100,000,000                | \$27,750,000  | \$45,000,000            | \$27,250,000                   |
| SFY 18 | \$150,000,000                | \$61,000,000  | \$50,000,000            | \$39,000,000                   |
| SFY 19 | \$200,000,000                | \$93,600,000  | \$55,000,000            | \$51,400,000                   |
| SFY 20 | \$250,000,000                | \$125,000,000 | \$60,000,000            | \$65,000,000                   |

\*May include full-day comprehensive services for three year old children, and includes restoration of funds to SFY12 levels on existing PFA grants

As the chart shows, the Birth to Five Initiative investment in the ECBG will increase services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Through the Prevention Initiative, the State anticipates providing access to high-quality, comprehensive center-based education and care for approximately 4,000 additional infants and toddlers, and providing home visiting services to approximately 4,800 additional families with very young children by SFY 2020. Also, in addition to the additional slots that will be created in the More at Four program, the State anticipates expanding the PFA program to an additional approximately 14,000 three and four year olds by SFY 2020.

*(2) Provide High-Quality Preschool Programs High-Need Communities; and*

*(4) Characteristics of High-Quality Preschool Programs*

In developing its new More at Four option for PFA, Illinois reviewed both the research literature and the program requirements of the most successful large-scale preschool programs in the nation. This review confirmed the importance of many of the key quality features that have been part of the State's PFA program since its inception, and which will be required of More at Four programs, including:

- Small class sizes of no more than 20 students
- Each class taught by a teacher who holds a Professional Educator License with an Endorsement in Early Childhood Education, supported by a qualified aide with endorsement as a Paraprofessional Educator
- Inclusion of children with disabilities (if children have IEPs, the classroom teacher must hold a Special Education Endorsement)
- Children who have limited English proficiency must receive appropriate instructional supports (see Appendix beginning page 34 for details on this requirement). For a Transitional Bilingual classroom, the teacher must speak the language of the majority of the children and hold a Bilingual endorsement. For a Transitional Program of Instruction, the teacher must hold an English as a Second Language Endorsement
- Developmental screening in all domains (physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive development) to identify possible developmental delays or disabilities, English Proficiency Screening, and health, mental health, vision, and hearing screenings
- A research-based curriculum and assessment system aligned with the IELDS and the World-class Instructional Development and Design (WIDA) English Language Development Standards and Early Spanish Language Development Standards
- Parent engagement services customized to meet the cultural and linguistic demands of the community and focused on the seven Child and Family Outcomes described in the Head Start Family & Community Engagement Framework, including language support services
- Meals and snacks as appropriate for the length of the program day, following the guidelines of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program.

In full recognition that children with the highest needs tend to encounter obstacles to enrollment and participation in early learning and development programs, including lack of information about benefits or availability of early learning programs; inadequate family or peer supports; linguistic or cultural isolation; and

difficulty meeting enrollment requirements, the More at Four program option will require additional elements:

- A full-day program, defined as at least as long as the first grade day in the local school district (all Illinois schools offer at least a five hour school day)
- Enhanced parent engagement services, including Bachelor's prepared parent educators, that as much as possible, reflect the language and culture of the community
- Enrollment of children with multiple, significant risk factors
- Universal and targeted supports for children's positive behavior and social-emotional development
- Enhanced support for families to obtain needed health, mental health, dental, and social services through well-articulated partnerships with other service providers in the community
- Salaries for teachers that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff
- At least 60 minutes of physical activity daily
- Instructional leaders (master teachers, curriculum coordinators, or education coordinators) with specific early childhood expertise and expertise in serving culturally and linguistically diverse children, in a ratio of no more than one per ten classrooms, whose primary responsibility is to provide embedded professional development and implement a professional learning community focused on instructional excellence.

School districts and other early learning providers will be required to develop and implement a comprehensive, culturally responsive outreach and recruitment plan to ensure that families with children with very high needs are made aware of the program and encouraged to participate. The programs must give priority for enrollment in the More at Four program option to children with multiple, significant risk factors. Programs will be supported through technical assistance and community systems planning to develop localized strategies for identifying and enrolling children with highest needs in More at Four. Programs may choose to implement mixed-age

and/or mixed-income classrooms, but will be required to allocate costs such that this federal grant and any state or local matching funds are allocated only to serving Eligible Children.

*(3) Increase the Number and Percentage of Eligible Children Served in High-Quality Preschool Programs*

As described in Section C and in Table A, Illinois plans to serve approximately 13,760 children in the More at Four program option by 2018, the final year of the grant. The Birth to Five Initiative blueprint includes a state investment in this expansion of over \$125 Million over the four calendar years of the grant period, as well as sustaining the expanded slots through State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2019 and 2020.

The participating High-Need Communities are listed in Section C and Subgrantees have all signed preliminary Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with ISBE, which are attached to this application. Approximately 45% of all Eligible Children in Illinois live in these communities.

Illinois' PFA is administered as a grant-funded program with five-year grant periods. Every five years, all PFA funding (with the exception of the funding set aside by law for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS)) is re-competed. The next re-competition is scheduled for the spring of 2016 for services in SFY 2017-2021. Through this re-competition process, the State may identify additional communities that will implement the PFA More at Four program option, as the competition must by law be open to the entire state. If so, the State will work with the federal departments to amend its State Plan for this grant. (Note: Federal PDG funds will not be re-competed; only state Early Childhood Block Grant funds.)

Illinois recognizes that an early learning and development program that seeks to provide continuous, high-quality services to children with highest needs must take a systemic approach. No single program can fully address the complexity of need experienced by some families and communities. In the More at Four communities, Subgrantees will be supported to develop a "pipeline" approach to engage and connect high-need families to preschool. The "pipeline" is designed to ensure

multiple systems—health, early care and education, family support, social services, and other services—work in concert towards the shared purpose of engaging children with the highest needs in high-quality early learning and development programs. Special attention to contract incentives, cross-sector training, communications strategies, and local engagement are key components of the pipeline.

More at Four Subgrantees will be expected to fill at least 80 percent of their slots with children with very high needs, defined as children who already display significant developmental delays in two or more areas, who are homeless, in foster care, in poverty, and/or who have multiple other significant risk factors such as parents who themselves have low education or a disability (see Sample Eligibility Checklist in Appendix on page 40). In addition, More at Four Subgrantees will work with their local community collaboration to ensure that a defined subset or cohort of children with very high needs receives continuous, high-quality comprehensive early learning and development services from before birth through third grade (see Section CPP-2). With support from state- and regional-level community systems development staff, the local community will identify strategies to ensure those children most in need are targeted for outreach and engagement. Children with special needs will receive particular attention in the transition from Part C to Part B.

##### *(5) Expectations for School Readiness*

The goal of the PFA More at Four program option is to support the school readiness of children with very high needs throughout the state. As described in Section C, the State has established its expectations for what children should know and be able to do upon kindergarten entry. (See IELDS in Appendix on page 8.) The State's kindergarten assessment system, the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), will provide information about the development of all children during the kindergarten year when implemented statewide in the 2015-16 school year. KIDS data will be collected in English and Spanish based on the educational program of each child. KIDS data is included in the State's Longitudinal Data System, which also includes information about participation in all state-funded PFA programs.

*(6) Stakeholder Support*

As indicated in the letters of support attached to this application, the State's plan for establishing and expanding the intensive More at Four program option in the context of the Birth to Five Initiative has received strong support from a broad group of stakeholders: state-level advisory bodies including the ELC and Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Advisory Council; the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for IDEA Part C; the State's monitoring and professional development partners and resources such as McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University and Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA); professional associations including Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), the Illinois Federation of Teachers, and Illinois Head Start Association; and community collaborations and civic leaders. Importantly, the State's plan for Preschool Expansion, including the plan to increase funding to the ECBG by \$50 million each year for five years with a portion of that increase going to fund expansion of the More at Four program option, was unanimously approved by the ISBE at their September 2014 meeting; a letter of support from the State Board Chair is included in the attachments and Approval of the State Plan is included in Appendix on page 29.

*(7) (a) State Level Investments*

The State's plan, as detailed in Sections C, D, and E, includes investments in the state-level infrastructure necessary to support implementation of high-quality preschool services for children with high needs. Through both the federal and state investment, several new staff positions will be created to support implementation of the project (see job descriptions in Appendix on page 42), including a Preschool Expansion Project Director who will oversee implementation of the new More at Four programs and ensure compliance with all federal reporting requirements; additional Principal Consultants in the ISBE Early Childhood Division to administer grants, connect programs to resources, and ensure high-quality implementation; a Family Services Manager to oversee supports to programs focused on these topics; and a Community Systems Policy Director to oversee the development and implementation

of a new regional support structure for local-level early childhood collaborations. A Preschool- to-Third Grade Continuity Project Director (P-3 Director) will also be hired through a contract with a state university (see Section (F)(2)). As preschool services expand through the federal and state investment, the State will fund the necessary additional monitoring visits required to ensure that new programs are meeting all program requirements, successfully enrolling children with highest needs, and operating at a high level of quality as described in Section (C)(2).

Providing Comprehensive Services and intensive family engagement support is a new role for many school district early childhood programs. The State recognizes that programs will need training, technical assistance, and supportive resources to develop and implement effective services that engage families in their children's learning, support them as decision-makers in their children's education, and develop their leadership skills. Programs will also need assistance in forming effective partnerships with other service providers in their communities through which they will be able to ensure children's and families' health, mental health, social service, and basic needs are met. ISBE will develop a set of supports for Comprehensive Services and family engagement as detailed in Section (C)(1)(j).

Programs will also need additional support in implementing effective strategies for supporting the social and emotional development of children with very high needs. Subgrants for More at Four include support for mental health consultation services, and the state will conduct an assessment of Subgrantee's needs for additional training and technical assistance in implementing both universal and targeted strategies for supporting positive behavior among their preschool students. The State will work with its professional development contractors to develop and implement these additional supports in the first year of the grant.

The State will also invest in the development of regional supports for local-level community early childhood collaborations to ensure that the new More at Four programs are integrated into a seamless set of services birth to third grade for those children with the highest needs in a community, as described in Section CPP-2. To ensure greater continuity in curriculum and family engagement supports from preschool through third grade, the State will invest federal resources from this grant

in a contract with a state university to support the P-3 Director and a series of P-3 Summer Institutes to support the development and implementation of community-level action plans, as described in Section (F)(2).

Through ExceleRate Illinois, the State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Illinois focuses its program improvement efforts on supporting instructional leaders to implement high-quality embedded professional development and continuous program improvement strategies. Through this grant, the State will extend its existing Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC) investment in an intensive model of supporting instructional leaders to support excellent preschool instruction as described in Section (C)(1)(f). In addition, ISBE will expand its contract for intensive coaching for PFA grantees who need additional support to meet program quality expectations, as described in Section (C)(2)(a), and will engage More at Four Subgrantees in its RTT-ELC-funded supports for the Awards of Excellence in Family and Community Engagement and Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Practice as described in Sections (C)(1)(c) and (C)(1)(i). Finally, the State will strengthen its Awards of Excellence program by investing federal grant resources to support programs seeking to earn an Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs as described in Section (C)(1)(c).

The State will also invest its resources in conducting an evaluation of the new, more intensive More at Four program. Planning for this evaluation will begin in 2016, and data collection will begin with the 2016-17 school year. The evaluation will focus on the extent to which More at Four programs are successful in recruiting, enrolling, and retaining with high attendance those children with the highest needs in communities, and the effectiveness of the program in preparing these children for success in school.

*(b) Subgrants to Early Learning Providers*

The State will subgrant 95% of the federal funds and an additional \$111 million in state funds over the four years of the grant to early learning providers in eighteen High-Need Communities throughout the state. The communities and Subgrantees were selected through a statewide needs assessment and comprehensive outreach

process as described in detail in Section (D)(3). Each of the Subgrantees will begin to provide the More at Four program to Eligible Children no later than September 2015.

The State will support high-quality implementation of the More at Four program through the many supports described above and in Section E.

*Note: The Ambitious and Achievable Plans presented in Sections C, D, E, and F together comprise the Ambitious and Achievable Plan for this section.*

## **B. Illinois' Commitment to State Preschool Programs**

As described in the Executive Summary above, Illinois has long been recognized as a national leader in developing and implementing high-quality early learning services for children from birth through age five, including high-quality preschool. The State has developed many of the critical infrastructure components necessary to support the excellent implementation of these services and will strengthen these infrastructure components as needed through the implementation of this Plan.

### *(1) State Early Learning and Development Standards*

Illinois has developed and implemented IELDS that cover children from birth to kindergarten entry as well as new Early English Language Development Standards that are aligned to the K-12 English Language Development Standards and linked to the IELDS (see a summary of Standards and sample pages in Appendix on page 8). The IELDS were developed with extensive input from content experts and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines who work with very young children and their families. The standards cover all domains of development, including physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development; include standards around math and science; include specific standards focused on English Language Learner Home Language Development; and are appropriate for all children, including children with disabilities and children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (see letter from standards expert Catherine Scott-Little in Appendix on

page 47). Infants and toddlers are covered by the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three (IELG), which include a unique focus on the newborn period and the development of self-regulation skills and approaches to learning. Children ages three to kindergarten entry are covered by the IELGS for Preschool, which have been aligned with the State’s Kindergarten Learning Standards and Illinois Learning Standards for grades one through twelve, both of which incorporate the Common Core State Standards. In addition, the IELDS have been aligned to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (see alignment analyses in Appendix on page 49).

Use of the standards is required in all early learning programs in Illinois, including home visiting programs, licensed child care, and PFA programs. ExceleRate Illinois also requires the use of the standards to guide instruction at all Circles of Quality (see Appendix on page 60). Illinois has developed comprehensive supports for programs to support high-quality implementation of the standards. In addition to a standard introductory training that is used across all program types and is available online in English and Spanish, a rich array of tip sheets for teachers and parents (each available in three to five languages) has been created and linked to the standards. A library of “benchmark videos” is also available online in English and Spanish, with examples of children’s learning explicitly tied to specific benchmarks from the IELG and IELDS.

## *(2) The State’s Financial Investment*

Illinois has a long history of strong investment in educational programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. After PFA was enacted on July 1, 2006, the State began a very aggressive implementation ramp-up, and the State’s annual investment in the ECBG, which serves birth through five year olds, grew by more than \$107 million between SFY 2006 and 2009. Table B provides details on the State’s overall financial investment in PFA services, as well as its investment specifically in PFA for four-year-old children in SFY 2011-14 (Note: Only the figures for the four-year-old children are included in Table B in the federal Excel workbook). Illinois is one of the few states to have designed its state preschool program to serve children ages three

and four. The total appropriation for PFA and the total number of children served over the past four years is provided below.

TABLE B (Including full PFA Appropriation)

| State Fiscal Year | Total PFA Appropriation | Appropriation Covering 4 Yr. Olds | Total Number of Children Served | Number of 4 Yr. Olds Served |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2011              | \$289,715,561           | \$171,223,131                     | 82,150                          | 48,551                      |
| 2012              | \$259,770,892           | \$151,575,706                     | 78,607                          | 45,867                      |
| 2013              | \$241,161,135           | \$145,670,953                     | 75,623                          | 45,573                      |
| 2014              | \$238,037,465           | \$139,238,834                     | 75,231                          | 44,006                      |

*Additional notes on information provided in Table B: Illinois does not currently collect income information for families of four year olds served in state preschool programs. Therefore Column I in Table B in the Excel Workbook includes the number of enrolled children who were found through the program’s comprehensive screening process to have multiple risk factors for school failure. The numbers cited for total population and four year olds below 200% FPL is provided by demographers at the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map project (IECAM), and reflects both the significant drop in births and the reduction in percentage of children who are low income that the state has experienced over the past several years. Illinois uses the 2013 estimate of number of four-year-olds below 200% FPL—the most recent year for which estimates are available-- for Table A as well. Local funding reflected in Table B in the federal workbook does not include Title I or other local preschool funding unless the district has explicitly tied these funding streams to its Preschool for All program.*

State Fiscal Years 2011-14 were a time of severe financial crisis for the State, which has faced one of the worst pension funding crises in the nation. Illinois was also severely affected by the Great Recession, and state revenues have been slow to rebound. The State was forced to implement painful cuts across all types of services, including K-12 education, higher education, and human services. During this period,

the state investment in PFA was cut by over 18%. In SFY 2012, in order to focus resources most effectively on children with high needs, ISBE strengthened requirements that to receive first priority for funding, programs must serve a minimum of 80% (rather than 51%) of children who are at risk for academic failure.

Importantly, local communities and school districts that recognized the value of early education absorbed some of the impact of these budget cuts, and the number of children served did not drop as much as might be anticipated given the reductions in state funding. Most notably, CPS did not decrease access to preschool and in fact increased access in 2013 (see description of *Chicago: Ready to Learn!* in Appendix on page 108).

Over the same budget period, SFY 2011-2014, the State's overall appropriation for Child Care Assistance increased by 12%, from \$885 million to \$992 million. Given the State's strong support for braiding PFA funding with Child Care Assistance Funding, this increase represents a significant additional investment in children in the State's preschool program that is not reflected in just the PFA appropriation.

### *(3) Enacted and Pending Legislation, Policies, and/or Practices*

Illinois has long been a leader in providing high-quality early childhood services to its most at-risk children. State-funded preschool was established in Illinois through legislation in 1985 as part of a comprehensive school reform effort. Funding grew incrementally in the 80s and 90s and then experienced a major expansion, as described above, with the establishment of PFA. PFA, as its name implies, was authorized as a program designed to grow to provide universal access to preschool for all three and four year olds in the state (see statute and a history of ECBG funding in Appendix on page 110). As noted above, Illinois is committed to growing the program through the Birth to Five Initiative, including growing the More at Four program to provide effective, intensive services to those children with the highest needs.

Through the years of growth in early childhood services in Illinois, many policies and practices have been implemented to increase quality and remove barriers to preschool access for those children most in need. For example, ISBE rebid all of the

grant funded preschool programs in 2011. This was undertaken to address a mismatch between the location of program slots and substantial demographic changes over time that affected some communities so that areas of greatest need had increased in locations that were underfunded by preschool services. A similar rebid process of both PFA/Prevention Initiative and Head Start/Early Head Start (delegate slots under the City's Head Start/Early Head Start grant) was undertaken in Chicago in 2013 to ensure that the communities that needed preschool the most had access to more seats.

Illinois has long supported a mixed-delivery model for PFA. Community-based organizations are able to apply directly to ISBE for funding (or to CPS if they are in the City of Chicago), and currently approximately 25% of slots statewide are delivered by community-based organizations. As described in detail in Section E, IDHS has a very supportive policy for blending and braiding Child Care Assistance and PFA funding to allow children to be served full-workday, full-year in a high-quality program if their parents are working or attending school or training. Similarly, ISBE and CPS are supportive of blending and braiding PFA with Head Start to ensure that children receive both comprehensive services and instruction by a Licensed Professional Educator.

Another demonstration of the States' long-term commitment to early childhood is the inclusion of early childhood programs in the State's capital construction efforts. In 2009, Governor Quinn signed into law a \$31 billion capital plan with a \$45 million appropriation for the Early Childhood Construction Grant program. This program allows for building and expanding additional facilities to reach more children with quality preschool services and is the nation's largest single state commitment to early childhood facilities to date. This investment in physical space capacity designated for the State's youngest learners is a clear commitment to having a strong future investment in early childhood.

#### *(4) Quality of Existing State Preschool Programs*

Through the PFA program, Illinois demonstrates an active commitment to high-quality preschool programs and a history of the ability to implement and maintain this quality through a state preschool program. ISBE's administrative regulations for PFA

require several of the fundamental elements of high-quality preschool and drive forward high-quality learning environments focused on outcomes, continuous program improvement, and instruction informed by standards and assessment. First, PFA advances high staff qualifications and small class sizes as outlined in Section (A)(2) above. Programs are strongly encouraged to employ teacher aides who have specific training in early childhood education and scholarships for aides are available through the State's Gateways Scholarship program. Additionally, PFA requires a comprehensive research-based curriculum aligned with the IELDS and comprehensive screening and assessment of every child, including, as appropriate, assessment of English Learners' development of language skills in their home language. Finally, PFA includes a focus on culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement, with PFA programs required to provide activities that enhance parent participation in two-way meaningful communication with the school regarding children's learning and other school activities, support parents to play an integral part in assisting their child's learning by getting actively involved in their child's education at school, and help parents understand their role as a full partner in their child's education.

Illinois strongly supports the inclusion of children with special needs in PFA classrooms. Many districts across the state have "blended" PFA classrooms that include a small number of children with disabilities and provide all of the instructional supports these children need. In some areas, districts have extended this approach by creating a tuition-based preschool program that meets PFA standards and that serves children with disabilities (who are supported by IDEA funding) with their typically developing peers.

In 2009, the state legislature amended the Illinois School Code to include preschool students in the definition of Limited English Proficient students, mandating the extension of bilingual services to state-funded, school-based preschool programs and making Illinois the first to offer statewide bilingual preschool.<sup>1</sup> Among the implications of this statutory change is the need for preschool teachers in bilingual

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<sup>1</sup> Public Act 95-793, amending 105 ILCS 5/14C-2.

settings to have a bilingual/ESL endorsement by 2016 (see Appendix on page 34 for more detail). School districts also now have the ability to include preschool children in their headcount when they submit claims for reimbursement for bilingual services. Illinois has invested in professional and resource development for higher education faculty to support the development of programs that will train the workforce in the skills necessary to appropriately serve this growing population, professional development cadres for local trainers, and a range of resources on supporting English Learning in preschool for the teachers.

All PFA programs are held accountable to the Illinois Birth to Five Program Standards (page 118 in Appendix), which are fully aligned with ExceleRate Illinois (see below). The standards require a research-based curriculum (aligned to the IELDS); developmental monitoring (child screening and assessment); continuous program improvement processes; family and community partnerships; and health promotion. The Standards also specifically include the expectation that programs will meet the needs of children with disabilities or other special needs and children and families whose home language is not English, and that programs will demonstrate respect for families' culture in meaningful ways. Compliance with Program Standards is assessed through program audits by ISBE, which uses the Environment Rating Scales and a compliance checklist to monitor programs. Programs are required to develop a continuous quality improvement plan in response to their monitoring report and tailored to their program's operations (more detail on the monitoring system is in Section (C)(2)). Additionally, ISBE reports tri-annually on outcomes related to PFA and completed an external evaluation of the PFA program through Erikson Institute in 2012. The evaluation showed that children enrolled in PFA made significant gains in language and literacy development.

ExceleRate Illinois, the state's QRIS, focuses on raising the quality across all early learning and development programs. ExceleRate is a comprehensive system that includes Licensed Child Care Centers, PFA and Center-Based Prevention Initiative (birth to age three), Head Start/Early Head Start Programs and, beginning in 2015, Licensed Family/Group Child Care Homes. ExceleRate provides standards, guidelines, resources, and supports to programs and professionals to make changes

necessary to achieve quality outcomes for children. The ExceleRate standards are organized across four domains, consistent across the four “Circles of Quality”: Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement, Leadership and Management, and Qualifications and Continuing Education. Programs achieve one of the Circles of Quality that define the tiered system based on meeting the standards under each of the four domains. There are four circles of quality: Licensed, Bronze, Silver, and Gold. For programs achieving the Gold Circle of Quality there are additional, focus-specific, Awards of Excellence to be pursued; the Awards are based on what research says is required to help at-risk children be prepared for success in school and later life. The Awards of Excellence cover: Preschool Teaching and Learning, Infant-Toddler Care and Education, Family and Community Engagement, Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, and Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Practice. (See Appendix beginning on page 60 for the criteria for the Circles of Quality and the Awards of Excellence relevant to this proposal).

All existing PFA programs have been enrolled in the ExceleRate system, and all new More at Four programs will be enrolled as well. Illinois is committed to ensuring state preschool is participating in monitoring and improvement work that is aligned with the work the State is doing with all other early learning and development programs, including child care and Head Start. OECD and ISBE recently dedicated one staff person each to the work of enrolling PFA programs in ExceleRate and working with these programs to achieve the Gold Circle of Quality, along with pursuing Awards of Excellence. The majority of PFA program sites have already received their initial ratings and 684 (75% of those rated to date) are at the Gold Circle, demonstrating that Illinois’ state preschool system has been built to support programs in meeting or exceeding select quality benchmarks on learning environment, instructional quality, and all program administrative standards; group size and staff/child ratios; staff qualifications; and professional development standards.

##### *(5) Coordination of Preschool Programs and Services*

OECD leads the State’s initiatives to create an integrated system of quality early learning and development programs in order to ensure all Illinois children have a

strong educational foundation before they begin kindergarten. OECD serves as a hub of coordination for federal and state level programs and funding streams that support vulnerable young children and their families, and sets the overall direction for the State's early childhood policies. It also coordinates the work of the ELC, a public-private partnership described in Section (B)(6). Additionally, OECD convenes the Inter-Agency Team (IAT), which comprises state leaders from the range of agencies that oversee early childhood programs including IDEA Part C and Part B, Child Care Assistance (i.e., Child Care and Development Fund), the Head Start State Collaboration Office, child welfare, day care licensing, Title V Maternal and Child Health, and Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV). Through the ELC and the IAT, Illinois has been able to develop an exceptionally inclusive Quality Rating and Improvement System, and develop and deploy coordinated systems of support for early childhood programs such as mental health consultation.

OECD also directs the RTT-ELC infrastructure building projects, as well as the federally funded Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

As described above and in more detail in Section E, Illinois has developed a strong infrastructure to support coordinated implementation of its many federal and state early childhood funding streams to support high-quality services for young children, especially those with the highest needs.

#### *(6) Role in Promoting Coordination of Preschool Programs and Services*

Illinois has been working toward a comprehensive system for families with young children that includes education and care, social and emotional development, maternal and child health and nutrition, specialized services, parenting and family support, and community services. This system-building focus led to the 2003 creation of the Illinois ELC to guide the State's administration of a high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive statewide early learning system. Established by statute, the ELC is comprised of gubernatorial and legislative appointees representing a broad range of constituencies including schools, child care centers, and homes, Head Start, higher

education, health and mental health providers, child welfare agencies, state, local, and federal government agencies, the General Assembly, business, law enforcement, foundations, and parents. The broad and deep committee structure advances the work of the ELC on a wide range of issues related to the comprehensive early learning and development needs of children and families, and includes over 400 early childhood stakeholders. (See page 121 in Appendix.) An example of the important work done by ELC committees is a recent report on the implementation struggles faced by programs working with multiple early childhood funding streams, which was based on a series of roundtable discussions held with over 200 participants in five locations across the state. The recommendations in this report will be considered by IAT and integrated into policy development over the coming year.

As part of the ELC Systems Integration and Alignment Committee, the Community Systems Development Subcommittee is charged with supporting local community partnerships to improve outcomes for children and families in their communities through effective state policies and practices. This Subcommittee works closely with the Consortium for Community Systems Development, an entity created through Illinois' RTT-ELC grant and charged with creating a systemic approach to supporting local collaboration across the wide range of early childhood programs and services. The Consortium has focused on building a strategic plan with systems level changes that will benefit state coordination and local work to ensure community collaborations support seamless coordination of services, particularly for the highest need communities. (See CPP-2 for more details.)

The ELC also has a statutory seat on the Illinois P-20 Council, which was created by statute in 2008 to work towards a seamless and sustainable statewide system of quality education and support from birth through adulthood. Evidence of progress towards better systems integration between early childhood and K-12 education is 2010 legislation on principal preparation that was supported by both the ELC and P-20 Council, making Illinois one of only a few states to establish a principal endorsement that extends from preschool to grade 12 in order to emphasize the principal's responsibility for integrating early learning and early elementary instruction.

## C. Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs

### *(1) State-Level Infrastructure and Quality Improvements*

As detailed in Section B, Illinois has made great progress in developing, implementing, and sustaining a strong birth-to-third-grade early childhood system. The state-level investments included in the State's Preschool Development Grants-Expansion Grant Plan will build upon and extend the State's system.

#### *(a) Early Learning and Development Standards*

The State has already created and implemented high-quality IELG and IELDS, and has implemented many supports for their use in early learning and development programs throughout the state. Therefore the State does not plan any specific new investments in this area through this grant, but will expect all Subgrantees to participate in training on the standards and to implement research-based curriculum and assessments that are aligned with the standards.

#### *(b) Implementing Program Standards Consistent with a High-Quality Preschool Program*

As noted in Section A, ISBE has an exceptionally strong and comprehensive set of program standards for its PFA program (see Birth to Five Program Standards in the Appendix on page 118), as well as rules governing class size and state qualifications that meet or exceed the definitional requirements for a High-Quality Preschool Program. Also as described in Section A, the program requirements for More at Four programs meet or exceed all components of the definition of a High-Quality Preschool Program.

The State will support the implementation of these program standards in several ways, including:

- Requiring Subgrantees to submit as part of their formal ISBE grant application a plan for how the program will implement all of the program requirements and meet all program standards. This requirement is an

existing part of the PFA application process, and programs are required to annually provide updates to their program plan when they apply for renewed grant funding. The new More at Four program requirements will be integrated into this application process. Program plans will be reviewed and approved by ISBE Early Childhood Division staff

- Providing (and continually updating) a comprehensive PFA Implementation Manual (the Manual Table of Contents is in Appendix beginning on page 126)
- Providing supports for programs to implement Comprehensive Services, including intensive parent engagement supports (see Sections (C)(1)(i) and (C)(1)(j) below)
- Continuing ISBE's supports for professional development, which include a contracts with The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning to provide coaching, workshops, webinars, and other professional development opportunities and STAR NET to provide technical assistance and training on best practices for preschool aged children with disabilities. (See Section (E)(10))
- Developing and providing specific supports to Subgrantees in implementing universal and targeted strategies for supporting positive behavioral development (social and emotional development) among More at Four participants (See Section (E)(10))
- Monitoring programs to ensure compliance and providing supports to strengthen implementation as described in Section (B)(2)
- Contracting with a state university to develop and implement a series of P-3 Summer Institutes and other supports for communities as they work to build seamless systems of early childhood services through the early elementary years. The Director of this effort will report jointly to a supervisor at the university, the Assistant Superintendent for Language and Early Childhood Development at ISBE, and the Executive Director of OECD. (See Section (F)(2).)

The State will hire several new staff over the course of the grant to assist with the successful implementation of programs. A new Preschool Expansion Project Director, paid through this federal grant, will work in OECD and will oversee overall grant implementation, including ensuring that the More at Four program is effectively reaching the most vulnerable children in communities as intended. He or she will also ensure timely reporting to the federal Departments on the State's project implementation. Additional Principal Consultants (similar to a project officer) will be hired with federal and state funds in the ISBE Early Childhood Division (one new consultant added in each of the first three years of the grant; first three years of first consultant to be hired with federal funds) to oversee grant implementation within the context of the larger PFA program. A Community Systems Policy Director will be hired with state funds and placed in OECD to oversee the implementation of the State's community systems plan (see Sections (E)(1) and CPP-2). Finally, a Family Services Manager will be hired with state resources in the ISBE Early Childhood Division to oversee the implementation of new supports to school districts around family engagement and comprehensive services in the p-3 years. (Position descriptions are in Appendix beginning on page 42.)

*(c) Meeting the Needs of Children with Disabilities and English Learners*

Children with Disabilities: For the past three years, a statewide consortium of stakeholders, including family members of children with disabilities, early childhood educators, early intervention providers, Head Start, school district administrators, child care providers, higher education, parent information centers, and technical assistance project staff has convened under ISBE, to guide the State's continuing efforts to ensure that children with disabilities are served in inclusive environments. The consortium has gathered input from the field and created resources to support inclusive practices in early childhood programs throughout Illinois. As a result of the work of the consortium, ISBE has implemented a Preschool Least Restrictive Environment Initiative (LRE) targeting school districts that, based on data, are in need of technical assistance around inclusive options for preschool-aged children with disabilities. The ELC also focuses specifically on ensuring that children with

disabilities and delays receive particular attention in the State's broader early childhood systems building through a Special Education Subcommittee that includes a diverse group of disability stakeholders, including agency leaders of Part B and Part C of IDEA within ISBE and IDHS, respectfully.

Illinois has also developed many products, tools, and resources to promote preschool inclusion and to support stakeholders in the provision of special education and related services to young children with disabilities in regular early childhood programs. These resources include a preschool inclusion brochure for families and professionals, in English and Spanish, to better explain LRE and inclusion, and tools for systems change planning.

ISBE funds technical assistance projects to ensure school district staff are aware of and are implementing best practices. STAR NET (Support and Technical Assistance Regional Network) provides training and technical assistance to early childhood special education preschool staff and families of young children. Early CHOICES (Children Have Opportunities in Community and Educational Settings) is a Preschool LRE initiative that promotes increasing high-quality inclusive education for each and every preschool child by providing technical assistance and professional development to early childhood professionals and families in Illinois. The Subgrantees will be able to leverage this grant opportunity to target additional inclusive classrooms to increase the number of children who are able to receive special education supports and services in the LRE.

Through this grant, Illinois will fund the development of additional supports for programs that seek to earn the Award of Excellence (AoE) for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (see Appendix on page 101 for award criteria). These new supports, including training on the use of the recently published *Inclusive Classroom Profile*, will be integrated into STAR NET and Early CHOICES to ensure sustainability.

The majority of higher education institutions in Illinois that prepare early childhood teachers for licensure offer programs leading to endorsements in both early childhood and special education. Illinois offers scholarships to early childhood teachers seeking licensure/endorsements through the Gateways Scholarship Program

and state policies require early childhood education teachers working with children with IEPs to have this endorsement.

English Learners: Illinois has enacted Early Childhood Bilingual Rules that extend specialized services to English Learners who are in state-funded preschool programs. These rules specify the instructional model that is most appropriate for serving English Learners – either bilingual education, or an approach that intentionally supports the child’s native language development while developing their English language skills. Traditionally, students have not been eligible for additional language services until kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade. These changes, along with the inclusion of home language development standards as part of IELDS, demonstrate that Illinois is committed to ensuring these children develop skills in their home language and English. Illinois has included Spanish Language Development as a subscale of its kindergarten assessment tool, KIDS, to track the language skill development of English learners (the vast majority of whom in the state are Spanish speaking) in both languages.

In order to implement high-quality programs for English Learners, Illinois has made investments in a workforce that is prepared to meet their unique needs. The Bilingual Rules address the competencies of the workforce needed to provide specialized services, including implementation of high-quality bilingual education programs. As of July 1, 2016, preschool teachers working with children whose home language is not English are required to hold a specialized Bilingual/ESL endorsement. Illinois has used state scholarship funds and RTT-ELC funds to support districts and teachers in meeting the requirement for the Bilingual/ESL endorsement. In the last two years, the State spent \$473,375 on these scholarships and has committed an additional \$200,000 over the next two years to further support this critical workforce development priority.

Illinois has also made investments in supporting the professional development of all teachers working with English Learners. Through The Center: Resources of Teaching and Learning, ISBE offers a wide range of professional development opportunities focused on supporting English Learners in the early childhood classroom. Through RTT-ELC, the State has contracted with The Center to provide

intensive supports to programs seeking the Award of Excellence in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (see Award criteria in Appendix on page 103). The criteria for this award were developed by a committee of experts in early childhood education for English learners, including university faculty and experienced practitioners, and reflect best practice in the field. ISBE is coordinating with the WIDA Consortium to develop new supports for teachers of ELs, including possible master cadres for large-scale in-service training and developing a manual for implementation of the Early English Language Standards. ISBE receives ongoing recommendations for supporting preschool English Learners from the early childhood subcommittee of the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education.

In addition, ISBE, OECD, IDHS, and DHS have all adopted “Guiding Principles for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness” (see Appendix page 130) as part of a shared collective vision that every child will have early childhood experiences that promote healthy development and learning that respects, promotes, and builds on their cultural, racial, ethnic, and other family background and experiences.

*(d) Needs Assessment of Current Availability of High-Quality Preschool Programs*

Illinois has an excellent system for ongoing needs assessment in early childhood. IECAM contains regularly updated information that can be broken down by many different geographical categories, including school district boundaries, municipalities, townships, counties, zip codes, and federal and state legislative districts. Information in IECAM includes:

- Numbers of children at each age, broken out by:
  - Level of poverty (under 100%, 130%, 185%, 200%, and 400% FPL)
  - Work status of parents
- Funded enrollment for
  - Preschool for All
  - Head Start
  - Early Head Start

- Prevention Initiative (0-3 program)
- Home visiting programs
- Licensed capacity for
  - Child Care Centers (capacity of license-exempt centers also available)
  - Child Care Homes
- Number of accredited providers (soon to include number of providers at different levels of ExceleRate Illinois and their capacity)
- Number of children participating in (broken out by age)
  - Child Care Assistance (by provider type)
  - Early Intervention

The IECAM project, which was begun as a public-private partnership at the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and receives continuing funding from ISBE and IDHS, also provides more in-depth needs assessment data as needed for the State's early childhood system building efforts, including data on the prevalence of key risk factors among children in different geographies across the state. The State used the IECAM system to inform its selection of the High-Need Communities for this expansion grant, and will continue to use this system to identify areas of highest need for annual expansion over the four years of this grant.

No additional investment will be made in this area through this PDG Expansion Grant as the efforts already underway are sufficient to meet the State's goals.

*(e) Preschool Teacher Education and Licensure*

The State is designing and implementing a new teacher licensure system, which will require teacher preparation programs throughout the state to significantly retool their early childhood and elementary education programs over the next few years. Proposed age and grade endorsements will create a birth-through-grade 2 continuum and will require that kindergarten teachers be early-childhood-trained educators.

ISBE convened the Early Childhood Advisory Group (ECAG), comprised of early childhood stakeholders, to develop recommendations for a redesign of the early childhood teacher preparation programs. ISBE has proposed administrative rules

(now out for public comment) to implement these recommendations as requirements for approved early childhood teacher preparation programs in Illinois. If approved, redesigned programs will be aligned with state learning standards (including IELG, IELDS, and the Illinois Learning Standards, which incorporate the Common Core State Standards); NAEYC program standards; the new Illinois Professional Teaching Standards; and new, ECAG-developed content area standards for English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Assessment. Redesigned programs will also align to the benchmarks of the Illinois Gateways Level 5 ECE Credential, a part of the early childhood credentialing system in Illinois that includes child care providers and is incorporated into the ExceleRate Illinois QRIS standards. This change represents substantial progress towards better aligning the expectations of early childhood teachers in both public school and community-based settings.

No additional investment will be made in this area through this PDG Expansion Grant as the efforts already underway are sufficient to meet the State's goals.

*(f) Teacher and Administrator Early Education Training and Professional Development*

Through RTT-ELC, Illinois is awarding two rounds of competitive grant funding to institutes of higher education to enhance their early childhood teacher preparation programs. In February, Illinois awarded \$500,000 in grants to eleven four-year teacher preparation programs to improve the preparation and ongoing professional development of early childhood educators through innovative partnerships with two-year institutions. Over thirty-five institutions are participating in this work. All grantees are aligning the programs to new teacher preparation standards and working on ways to increase articulation of coursework. With partners, grantees are engaging in a range of other activities, including: aligning their programs with the Illinois Gateways Credentials; exploring ways to enhance student advising for a more seamless transfer between two and four-year institutions; building more flexible pathways for degree attainment; incorporating experiences to prepare students to be successful on the newly required edTPA (an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness) for teacher licensure; and enhancing their curriculum for a stronger

emphasis in areas such as early math, infant/toddler development, and cultural and linguistic diversity. In the spring of 2015, Illinois will competitively award a second round of grants to new two- and four-year institutions and to successful and innovative round-one grantees for further implementation of their work.

Also through RTT-ELC, Illinois has funded an innovative approach to implementing and strengthening embedded professional development and professional learning communities in PFA and Head Start programs that have not yet reached the Gold Circle of Quality in ExceleRate Illinois. Through a competitive process, the State identified a contractor, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, which has begun to implement “Going for Gold,” an intensive 12-month cohort-based experience that will provide instructional leaders (e.g., instructional coordinators, education coordinators, master teachers, etc.) in up to 200 programs statewide with structured learning and proven supports that assist them in overcoming the challenges of managing school- or center-based preschool programs, and reshaping their daily work to focus on implementing embedded professional development. The Ounce was also selected as the contractor to provide supports to Gold-rated programs seeking the Award of Excellence in Preschool Teaching and Learning in ExceleRate Illinois. As in Going for Gold, the focus of these support services, entitled “Lead. Learn. Excel.,” will be on building instructional leaders’ capacity to establish program-embedded professional development routines for continuous professional learning, instructional effectiveness, and improvements in practice, as well as the necessary structures and systems to achieve the standards of the Award of Excellence (page 75 in Appendix). The approach for both of these support programs is modeled after the highly successful work completed by the Ounce as part of their Investing in Innovation (i3) grant from the US Department of Education. Depending upon the rating of their current PFA program, each Subgrantee under this grant will participate in either the Going for Gold or Lead. Learn. Excel. support program. Funding for these services (totaling approximately \$4 million) is available through RTT-ELC through December 2016. An additional \$1,000,000 in state resources is included in this plan to continue these services for new More at Four programs through at least December 2019.

*(g) Statewide Longitudinal Data System*

Illinois has included children participating in PFA in the ISBE Student Information System (SIS) for the past six years. SIS has a unique statewide identifier for each student that allows for the tracking of student-level data from first entry into a public school system (which may be as early as birth in the Prevention Initiative programs) through high school. SIS is linked to the State's higher education data system and the Department of Employment Security data system to form the overall Statewide Longitudinal Data System (LDS) that enables the state to track student's success throughout their school years and into the workforce.

Through RTT-ELC, Illinois is working to link data from the Child Care Assistance Program, Head Start, and Early Intervention to the LDS to provide a much more comprehensive data set tracking the early childhood experiences of young children and their later success in school and in employment.

No additional investment will be made in this area through this PDG Expansion Grant as the efforts already underway are sufficient to meet the State's goals.

*(h) Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment System*

Illinois is already implementing a Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment System within its PFA programs. Programs are required to select and appropriately use research-based, formally validated, and reliable screening tools that measure children's development in at least the following areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, English proficiency, fine and gross motor skills, social skills, and cognitive development. Programs must also ensure that children are screened for health, oral health, vision, hearing, and mental health needs. Programs are required to select and appropriately implement formative assessment measures using a valid, reliable tool that is aligned with the IELDS and with the program's curriculum. Results from these formative assessments must be used to guide individualized instruction for children.

As described in Section (B)(2), the State's monitoring process for PFA programs and ExceleRate Illinois include the use of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and/or the Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CLASS),

both of which are valid, reliable tools for measuring components of environmental quality and/or the quality of adult-child interactions. Training is also broadly provided for programs on these tools so that programs can use them in their own ongoing program improvement processes.

KIDS, Illinois' kindergarten entry assessment, is described in Section (C)(3).

No additional investment will be made in this area through this PDG Expansion Grant as the efforts already underway are sufficient to meet the State's goals.

*(i) Parent Engagement*

The PFA More at Four program will build on and bridge between the family engagement work of the state's current PFA program, cross-sector early childhood work, and the cross-system birth-to-grade 12 Family Engagement Framework efforts developed by ISBE.

PFA has robust requirements that require each program to provide a description of its parent education and involvement activities, which include:

- Communication between the home and the preschool education program that is regular, two-way, and meaningful
- Parenting skills are promoted and supported
- Recognition that parents play an integral role in assisting student learning
- Parents are welcome in the program, and their support and involvement are sought
- Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

To support meeting these program requirements, ISBE offers descriptions of best practices and other resources in Section 9 of the PFA Implementation Manual (in Appendix on page 126). Parent supports are also built into existing projects such as the Illinois Early Learning Project, which includes a range of resources for parents around child development and the IELDS and IELG. And through RTT-ELC funding, a set of intensive supports for programs seeking the Award of Excellence in Family and Community Engagement (page 79 in the Appendix) are being implemented.

These resources are being supplemented by cross-agency efforts to build parent capacity to engage in decision-making; build protective factors; and support at-home learning. ExceleRate Illinois empowers families with accessible information about how to identify quality early learning services that meet their family's needs. Illinois recently launched a pilot of a new Family Specialist Credential, which includes four levels, ranging from high school diploma/GED level to Bachelor's Degree level. The credential will help build the capacity of professionals in early childhood settings to effectively work with families, including culturally and linguistically diverse families and those with very high needs.

In addition, PFA More at Four is supported by recent efforts of ISBE to elevate the importance of engaging the families of all students across the learning continuum, build school and district capacity to work with families, and integrate family engagement across agency initiatives through the development and implementation of a Family Engagement Framework. (See Appendix on page 132.)

In 2009, ISBE convened a strategic planning meeting to address the agency's parent involvement policy and coordinate parent involvement activities. In 2011, a broader internal committee convened, charged with building on prior work to create a research-based family engagement framework that was linked to the Eight Essential Elements of Continuous School Improvement, which serve as the organizing frame for school improvement efforts in Illinois. The team included representatives from key state and federal programs including Title I, Title III, IDEA, bilingual education, early childhood, educator licensure, and Response to Intervention (RTI). The process of developing the framework included a multi-tiered crosswalk of state and federal family engagement requirements and funding sources, existing program policies and practices, and existing programs and resources. The team synthesized research on family engagement and reviewed state and national models for family engagement frameworks, standards, planning and evaluation tools. The resulting framework establishes a common language and ways to conceptualize family engagement that allows for the integration and better coordination of federal and state rules and regulations on family engagement; assists with the development and identification of resources to build and strengthen the capacity of ISBE divisions, schools, districts,

and families; and promotes the implementation of systems of support that foster meaningful family engagement.

The ISBE Family Engagement Framework (Appendix on page 132) aligns to the requirements of this grant. The key elements of the framework are a set of principles and standards for effective engagement and a matrix for integrating families into all aspects of the educational system. The Principles for Effective Engagement are to:

- Develop a family engagement system
- Build a welcoming and supportive environment
- Enhance communication
- Include parents in decision-making.

The Eight Essential Elements for Effective Schools are comprehensive planning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership, professional development, conditions for learning, and family and community engagement. In an integration matrix linking the Eight Essential Elements to the Family and Community Engagement Framework, schools, and districts are urged to integrate families into all aspects of at-school and at-home learning and development. The integration matrix includes how to integrate families in the area of conditions for learning to ensure an optimal learning environment that promotes healthy development. The areas of curriculum and instruction also have strong ties to protective factors and healthy development through the Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards. Illinois was the first, and continues to be one of only a few, states with social emotional learning standards from P-12. These standards are a resource for schools and families to promote the healthy development of children.

ISBE is coordinating across the agency's divisions to fund and develop a foundational series of trainings for parents and school and program personnel, building dual-capacity in line with the *Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*, released by the U.S. Department of Education. The trainings for school personnel will focus on how to effectively engage families and how to integrate family engagement throughout programs. The family trainings will build parent knowledge about educational programs, child development, parenting and at-home learning, and resources and information that build protective factors. A

training-of-trainers model will build the capacity of ISBE staff, contractors, and partners to deliver trainings and support. The primary delivery system for schools will be through partnerships with the Regional Offices of Education (ROE), independent educational partners, which provide regional professional development, as well as the Illinois Center for School Improvement, a state contractor charged with providing technical assistance on school improvement. Once the foundational trainings are developed, complementary trainings will be developed which address program-specific knowledge and competencies. Supplemental resources and materials will be developed, as needed.

PDG Expansion Grant funds will be used to develop foundational training, in coordination with other state and federal funds; to develop early childhood complementary trainings, which align to the ISBE Family Engagement Framework and the Family Specialist Credential; and to deliver trainings. In addition, state funds will be used to hire a Family Services Manager (See page 45 in the Appendix), who will coordinate the Family Engagement and Comprehensive Services efforts under this grant.

*(j) Linkages to Other Early Learning Programs and Resources*

As acknowledged in Section (C)(1)(i), the role of families in supporting the healthy development of children is critical. Ensuring that families have access to needed services, including child health, mental health, family support, nutrition, child welfare, and adult education and training is a key goal of the More at Four program. To realize this goal, programs will forge partnerships with other community-based programs and supports, build local capacity to connect families to comprehensive services, and empower parents to better understand each of these areas.

The State's approach to supporting systemic linkages between PFA More at Four programs and other early learning programs and resources to support families is detailed in the Competitive Preference Priority 2 Section (CPP-2). This strategy is heavily focused on community systems development. At the program level, there is a need to build capacity of programs to engage in systematic planning and delivery of comprehensive services. The Family Services Manager will oversee the development

of training for program staff charged with family engagement and/or comprehensive service delivery. This training will address assessing family and community needs and assets; partnership management for coordinating, brokering, hosting, and providing services; planning and coordination of related direct services, such as homeless services, Title I, language support services; and evaluation of comprehensive service delivery. As part of the work described in section (C)(1)(i), empowering families with information about protective factors and how to support their children includes providing information about topics like child health, mental health, family support, nutrition, child welfare, and adult education. Parent information modules will be developed so that they can be accessed by parents directly or be used by parent services personnel for facilitated, in-person presentations and workshops that couple the modules with linking families to relevant local resources. To promote alignment within the birth-through-third grade continuum and provide families with continuity of services, comprehensive service delivery supports will target schools serving children in early elementary grades in addition to supporting preschool programs.

*(2) System for Monitoring and Supporting Subgrantee Continuous Improvement*

*(a) Monitoring System*

ISBE has developed and implemented a rigorous monitoring system, fully aligned with and integrated into ExceleRate Illinois, to assess programs' compliance with the requirements of the ECBG (see Section (B)(4) above). ISBE's contractor, the McCormick Center at National Louis University, visits each program on a three-year cycle. Monitoring visits include inspections of individual child files (including screening results and eligibility determination documentation), classroom lesson plans, personnel files, student assessment portfolios, and other documents as needed to determine compliance with program requirements. ISBE has revised its Monitoring Protocol to include the added requirements for More at Four programs funded through this grant (page 134 in Appendix). During the monitoring visit, all classrooms (or, if the grantee has more than ten classrooms, a random sample of one-half of the classrooms including at least one at each site) are assessed using the

ECERS-R. An assessor who has demonstrated at least 85% reliability with an anchor completes the ECERS-R; assessors complete reliability checks every six to ten assessments, as recommended by the instrument authors.

Under state law, the CPS is authorized to implement its own monitoring process for Chicago programs funded through ECBG, and this monitoring process has also been fully aligned with and integrated into ExceleRate Illinois. CPS has collaborated with the City of Chicago Head Start program and the Ounce of Prevention Fund—the two Head Start grantees in Chicago—to develop a common approach to monitoring program quality in these publicly funded preschool programs. This consortium uses the CLASS rather than ECERS-R to assess preschool classroom quality. Each classroom funded by CPS for PFA—whether in a school or in a community-based organization—is assessed with the CLASS at least once every three years, and as often as twice per year if quality has been deemed in need of improvement. All assessors maintain reliability certification through Teachstone (publisher of the CLASS instrument). The CPS monitoring process also includes reviews of child-, classroom-, and teacher-level documentation to ensure compliance with all PFA (and now More at Four) requirements.

In collaboration with the Consortium on Chicago School Research and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, ISBE will introduce a new parent questionnaire for More at Four families that programs will be required to implement as part of their ongoing continuous program improvement efforts. This questionnaire will be an early-childhood-specific adaptation of the Five Essentials (5-E) Survey that K-12 public schools across the state are currently required to implement to measure school climate. More at Four programs will be part of the validation study for this *5E-Early Ed* tool, which represents a significant advancement in measurement of the organizational conditions that make it more or less likely that teachers will be effective with young children and families. Importantly, this approach to seeking parent feedback will be integrated with what school districts are already doing at the district and school level, and will provide critical information for program and school improvement efforts (see Appendix page 153 for a summary of *5E-Early Ed*).

Federal PDG Expansion Grant funds will be used in the first year of the grant to expand monitoring to include the new More at Four programs. In subsequent years, state funding will cover the increased monitoring costs.

For both ISBE- and CPS-monitored programs, timely feedback from monitoring visits is provided, including detailed information about how each classroom's "scores" on the classroom quality assessment instrument were determined. Programs are required to use this information to develop a continuous quality improvement plan (see model improvement plan in Monitoring Protocol in the Appendix beginning on page 146). Programs that score in the lowest range among monitored classrooms are provided with coaching to improve program performance. This coaching system has proven highly effective, with the majority of coached programs increasing their scores enough to move into the Gold Circle of Quality in ExceleRate Illinois within one year. Coaching will be expanded in the first year of the grant with federal funds, and then sustained through state funding in the remaining years of the grant.

Supporting Continuous Improvement at the Subgrantee Level: A unique feature of the More at Four program is its emphasis on intensive instructional leadership. Subgrantees are required to employ or contract with an instructional leader (e.g., Curriculum Coordinator, Instructional Coach, Master Teacher, etc.) at a ratio of no less than 1.0 FTE per 10 classrooms. Illinois instituted this requirement based on lessons learned from Early Reading First and Investing in Innovation grant projects completed in the state over the past twelve years. These projects showed the importance of sustained, embedded professional development for supporting excellent instruction in preschool classrooms. As described in Section (C)(1)(f), Illinois will provide intensive support to these instructional leaders, including training on the use of CLASS and ECERS-R for continuous program improvement, to ensure they have the skills required to implement effective professional learning communities and other supports for teachers.

*(b) Statewide Longitudinal Data System (LDS)*

Illinois has implemented a statewide longitudinal data system that is aligned with the action steps defined and monitored by the Data Quality Campaign. All children

served through the ECBG, including all children enrolled in PFA and these new More at Four classrooms, are included in this data system. The system allows for tracking the progress of children from school enrollment (in preschool, kindergarten or birth-to-age three Prevention Initiative programs) through grade twelve, and into higher education if the student remains in Illinois. The LDS includes child level data on KIDS (see (C)(3) below).

*(c) Measurable Outcomes*

All PFA programs, including these new More at Four programs, have as their central goal supporting children's development of the full range of skills and abilities detailed in the IELDS. These standards describe what children are expected to know and be able to do at the end of the preschool period and prior to kindergarten entry, and thus comprise the school readiness expectations of the State.

Programs are required to implement a comprehensive assessment system, which must include a developmentally appropriate, research-based, formative assessment of children on all areas of development. The assessment must be aligned with the IELDS, and must be completed at least three times per year.

Programs must regularly review children's assessment results and use the assessment information to inform individualized instruction and classroom lesson plans. In addition, programs must look at classroom-, site-, and program-level results on the assessments and use this information to inform program improvement efforts, including professional development plans. Compliance with these requirements for the implementation of assessments and use of their results for continuous improvement is monitored as part of the monitoring process described above.

*(3) Measuring Outcomes in Kindergarten*

ISBE recognizes that high-quality early childhood education plays a crucial role in putting children on track for academic success throughout elementary school, high school, postsecondary school, and beyond. In particular, kindergarten is a pivotal year in which children transition from early childhood programs to the primary grades. If kindergarteners have a successful and productive year in which they build their

cognitive and social-emotional skills, then they stand a better chance to succeed in later years.

ISBE has instituted KIDS to help teachers understand more fully children's development process, to provide information to teachers and administrators about each child's progress, to drive more effective classroom instruction, to help align early childhood and elementary school systems, and to address gaps in school readiness. It is a comprehensive process designed to provide information about children's competencies across developmental domains over time and to provide information about whether Illinois' kindergarteners have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in school.

ISBE first began developing a kindergarten readiness survey in early 2010 when the State Superintendent of Education formed a stakeholder committee of early childhood and elementary school teachers and administrators, early childhood development specialists, ISBE staff members, and others. The stakeholder committee released a report in April 2011 entitled, "A New Beginning: The Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey," which outlined the priorities for a kindergarten survey and the importance of kindergarteners' development process. ISBE is working with the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies (CCFS) and the Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research Center (BEAR) at the University of California-Berkeley's Graduate School of Education to develop and administer KIDS.

KIDS is an observation-based assessment tool that is completed by each child's teacher. It is based on developmental research and theory, includes developmental sequences of behaviors along a continuum, and spans the development trajectories of children in kindergarten. KIDS is administered through observation in natural settings either through teacher observations, family observations, or examples of children's work, which conforms with the recommendations of the National Research Council report on early childhood assessments that includes ongoing documentation of children's behavior in natural environments. It represents a full continuum assessment instrument for all children in kindergarten, including children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and English Learners. KIDS takes into consideration the specific cultural and linguistic characteristics of the diverse population of children

enrolled in kindergarten, including English Learners. Observers are trained to use multiple and diverse methods of evidence collection to identify what children can do, as opposed to single measures that may not be normed or valid and reliable for young children, especially those with IEPs or who are English Learners. KIDS is aligned to the IELDS, the IELG, and the Common Core State Standards.

KIDS looks at children's development across the five Essential Domains of School Readiness and is made up of eleven domains: Self-Regulation; Social and Emotional Development; Language and Literacy Development; Cognition: Math; Cognition: Science; Physical Development; Health; History – Social Science; Visual and Performing Arts; English Language Development (ELD); and Language and Literacy Development in Spanish (SLD). The focus of each domain is on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or behaviors that reflect each domain's developmental constructs. Because there are multiple measures for each domain, a completed KIDS instrument provides enough information to support individualized instruction along a developmental continuum. A child's learning and development across domains provides the child's overall learning and developmental profile. Importantly, through the SLD and ELD measures, educators of ELs will have formative measures for informing instruction to support language development.

KIDS is now in the third phase of implementation, following two successful pilot phases. To date, over 1600 kindergarten teachers have participated in the KIDS implementation training and 276 school districts are implementing KIDS. During this school year (2014-2015), there will be a calibration study to develop state-level norms for the instrument. There will also be a process implemented for determining KIDS 'criterion-zone boundaries' for readiness. The purpose of this process is to define regions along the scales of measurement of the various KIDS domains that are associated with children meeting Illinois standards of readiness, both at the beginning and end of kindergarten. This is to address the question of how KIDS' results relate to standards-based expectations for children's readiness, at the beginning of kindergarten and at the end of kindergarten.

The KIDS assessment system has been designed with parents in mind. Teachers are encouraged to involve families in the collection of observations and anecdotal

evidence of children’s skill development, as the opportunity to observe a child’s level of mastery is greatest when the child is interacting with a familiar adult. The individual-level reporting tool for KIDS, the Child Developmental Profile, has been specifically designed for teachers and family members to share information about the child’s development during parent-teacher conferences.

Full statewide implementation of KIDS is planned for the fourth and final phase of the KIDS project in school year 2015 - 2016.

### Section C Ambitious and Achievable Plan

Goals:

1. Implement State Preschool Program infrastructure improvements to ensure the high-quality implementation of PFA More at Four programs.
2. Extend the State’s effective monitoring system for PFA to the new/enhanced PFA More at Four programs.
3. Measure the outcomes of participating children through KIDS

| <b>ACTIVITY C-1: HIRE STATE-LEVEL STAFF TO MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION</b>   |                 |                       |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Rationale:</i> The State’s Plan represents a very significant expansion of preschool services and accompanying quality supports, and its implementation will require management by new state-level staff. |                 |                       |
| <i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up:</i> Statewide   |                 |                       |
| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>   | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
| <b>1: Post positions</b> for Preschool Expansion Project Director, ISBE Principal Consultant, Family Services Manager, Community Systems Policy Director   | Jan 2015        | ISBE, OECD            |
| <b>2: Hire staff</b> for above positions   | Feb 2015        | ISBE, OECD            |
| <b>3: Post position</b> for additional Principal Consultant  | Nov 2015        | ISBE                  |
| <b>4: Hire</b> additional Principal Consultant   | Jan 2016        | ISBE                  |
| <b>5: Post position</b> for additional Principal Consultant  | Nov 2016        | ISBE                  |
| <b>6: Hire</b> additional Principal Consultant   | Jan 2017        | ISBE                  |
| <b>7: Post position</b> for additional Principal Consultant  | Nov 2017        | ISBE                  |

|   |          |      |
|---|----------|------|
| <b>8: Hire</b> additional Principal Consultant  | Jan 2018 | ISBE |
| *Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether it's application for this grant is successful |          |      |

**ACTIVITY C-2: DEVELOP ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR EXCELLENCE IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICE**

*Rationale:* Programs will need support in completing the self-study, program improvement, and application process for achieving the Award of Excellence in Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

*Locations & Scale-Up:* Statewide, but with emphasis in first year on Selected Communities

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b>    | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Develop detailed plan</b> for supports for Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs                           | Oct-Dec 2014*      | OECD, STAR NET, ISBE  |
| <b>2: Amend contracts</b> for STAR NET, Early Choices and/or Illinois Early Learning Project to include new supports for inclusive practice | Jan-Feb 2014       | ISBE                  |
| <b>3: Provide intensive support</b> for programs seeking the Award of Excellence  | Mar 2014- Dec 2016 | Contractors           |

\*Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether it's application for this grant is successful

**ACTIVITY C-3: ENGAGE MORE AT FOUR SUBGRANTEES IN SUPPORTS FOR AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

*Rationale:* More at Four Subgrantees were selected in part because of their track record of excellent program implementation. Many of these programs are ready to pursue Awards of Excellence and will be targeted for supports that have been funded by the RTT-ELC grant.

| <i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up: Selected Communities</i>   |                        |                       |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b>        | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
| <b>1: Contact Subgrantees</b> to determine in which Awards of Excellence they will pursue   | Oct-Nov 2014*          | OECD, ISBE            |
| <b>2: Engage Subgrantees</b> in supports for Awards of Excellence in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Practices, Family & Community Engagement, and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs | Dec 2014*-<br>Feb 2015 | Contractors           |
| <b>3: Provide supports</b> to Subgrantees   | Mar 2015-<br>Dec 2016  | Contractors           |
| *Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether it's application for this grant is successful   |                        |                       |

#### **ACTIVITY C-4: ENGAGE MORE AT FOUR SUBGRANTEES IN PRESCHOOL**

##### **INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE SUPPORTS**

*Rationale:* Instructional leaders in More at Four programs will need support in implementing embedded professional development and professional learning communities that support excellence in classroom instruction for preschoolers.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* Selected Communities (in context of larger statewide effort)  
(Note: First two years of this work has been funded through RTT-ELC grant)

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Identify which Subgrantees</b> are eligible for Going for Gold and which are eligible for Lead. Learn. Excel. | Oct-Nov 2015*   | ISBE, OECD            |
| <b>2: Begin first cohorts</b> for Going for Gold and Lead. Learn. Excel.  | Oct-Nov 2015    | Contractor            |
| <b>3: All Subgrantees</b> participating in Going for Gold or Lead. Learn. Excel. (milestone)                        | Dec 2015        | Contractor            |

**ACTIVITY C-5: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT SUPPORTS FOR PROGRAMS AROUND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES**

*Locations & Scale-Up:* The first two years will focus on development of training modules and other supports; enhancing coordination efforts; strengthening capacities; and engaging in usability testing of modules, tools, and other resources. Services will be brought to full scale. A statewide comprehensive services awareness campaign will be launched and state and regional TA providers will provide ongoing TA supports to programs and schools. Families will have access to ongoing supports.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* Statewide

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b>    | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>                                      |
|---|--------------------|--|
| <b>1: Post position for Family Services Manager</b>   | Jan 2015           | ISBE   |
| <b>2: Complete internal and external gaps analysis</b> to identify family engagement and comprehensive service supports needed by school districts                            | Jan-Jun 2015       | Family Services Manager                                    |
| <b>3: Identify internal and partner resources and design and develop resources</b> including alignment guides, early childhood and comprehensive services content modules     | Jan-Jun 2015       | Family Services Manager                                    |
| <b>4: Procure family services contractor to develop and adapt trainings and materials</b> for schools, districts, and families  | Jun 2015           | Family Services Manager                                    |
| <b>5: Adapt, develop, and deliver train the trainer</b> institutes for foundational parent capacity building, early childhood content modules, and family specialist training | Jun 2015- Jun 2016 | Family Services Manager                                    |
| <b>6: Train trainers</b> including state staff, PD contractors and partners, and TA providers   | Jul 2016- Jun 2017 | Family Services Manager, ISBE consultants, State PD and TA |

|   |                        |  |
|---|------------------------|--|
|   |                        | Contractors,<br>Family Services<br>Contractor,<br>Regional Offices<br>of Education |
| <b>7: Review policies and strengthen alignment and coordination</b> of family engagement funding tools and instruments; monitoring and evaluation efforts; and continuous school improvement measures         | Apr 2015-<br>Dec 2018  | Family Services<br>Manager   |
| <b>8: Procure delivery of trainings to build school capacity</b>  | Jul 2016-<br>Jun 2018  | Family Service<br>Manager  |
| <b>9: Incorporate delivery of trainings</b> into existing PD grants/contracts, IGAs with ROEs for regional delivery   | Jan 2017-<br>Dec 2018  | Family Services<br>Manager   |
| <b>10: Launch EC and comprehensive services content modules</b> , post and advertise online modules, align and identify in-person modules through Gateways to Opportunity Registry                            | July 2016-<br>Dec 2018 | Family Services<br>Manager   |
| <b>11. Conduct family engagement and services awareness campaign</b> through conference presentations/workshops, superintendents bulletins, newsletters, PSAs, inclusion in Birth-Grade 3 Alignment Trainings | Apr 2015-<br>Dec 2018  | Family Services<br>Manager   |
| <b>12: Identify and develop ongoing evaluation systems and tools</b> for external and internal systems that is linked to continuous school improvement  | Jan 2016-<br>Dec 2017  | Family Services<br>Manager   |
| <b>13: Plan for sustainability</b> through appointment of Statewide advisory committee and private/public ventures  | Jan 2015-<br>Dec 2018  | Family Services<br>Manager   |

**ACTIVITY C-6: IMPLEMENT EXPANDED MONITORING SYSTEM AND ACCOMPANYING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS**

*Rationale:* Expansion of Preschool for All through More at Four requires expansion of the monitoring system and its related coaching supports.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* Selected Communities

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>   | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Amend contract</b> with monitoring contractor to allow for monitoring of More at Four Subgrantees in their first full year of implementation | Jan-Feb<br>2015 | ISBE                  |
| <b>2: Identify Subgrantees</b> that, based on past monitoring, may benefit from intensive coaching supports as they implement More at Four         | Jan-Feb<br>2015 | ISBE                  |
| <b>3: Amend contract</b> with The Center to provide additional coaching support to programs as they plan and start up More at Four program         | Jan-Feb<br>2015 | ISBE                  |
| <b>4: Begin providing coaching</b> to identified Subgrantees   | Mar 2015        | Contractor            |
| <b>5: Begin monitoring</b> of programs using revised monitoring protocol which incorporates More at Four program criteria                          | Oct 2015        | Contractor            |
| <b>6: All Subgrantees'</b> More at Four programs receive first monitoring visit (milestone)  | Jun 2016        | Contractor            |
| <b>7: Continue monitoring and coaching supports</b> to Subgrantees throughout grant period   | Ongoing         | Contractors,<br>ISBE  |

**Note:** For all Ambitious and Achievable Plan descriptions, appropriate financial resources for implementing the activities is addressed in detail in the Budget Narrative. Supporting evidence and information requested in the performance measures are provided in the Appendix as referenced in the narrative and/or in the federal Excel workbook, and details about how the State will address the needs of

Eligible Children, including those with special or very high needs, is addressed in detail in the narrative.

#### **D. Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community**

##### *(1 & 2) Selected Communities and Their Characteristics*

The State has selected the communities listed below to participate in the first year of the More at Four program option of PFA. Approximately 45% of Eligible Children in the state live in these selected communities. Preliminary MOUs with these Subgrantees are included as an attachment to this application. These communities were selected based on several factors:

- Number and percentage of Eligible Children not currently served by any publicly funded preschool program (e.g., PFA, Head Start, or school district-sponsored program)
- Number and percentage of Eligible Children with very high needs not currently served by a full-day, high-quality program that provides comprehensive services (this analysis used number of children in extreme poverty—below 50% FPL—as a proxy for very high needs)
- Effectiveness of existing collaborations within the community that will support continuous, high-quality, comprehensive services for children with very high needs from birth through third grade
- Readiness to implement services beginning either in February/March or August/September of 2015
- Special consideration was given to communities where new facilities constructed with state Early Childhood Capital Grants will be completed in 2015 because these capital grants were targeted to communities that were significantly underserved across the birth to five years of age span.

Community Profiles—Part I: Community Characteristics

| Community Name  | Subgrantee(s)          | Geographic Type (U, S, R)* | # of 4 year olds | # of Eligible 4 year olds (Income Below 200% FPL) | % of 4 year olds who are Eligible (Low Income) | Key Community Characteristics  |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---|--|--|
| Addison         | Addison SD 4           | S                          | 509              | 221   | 43%  | Large Latino immigrant population; pockets of high poverty   |
| Aurora          | Aurora West SD 129     | U/S                        | 4,412            | 2,243   | 51%  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> largest city in IL; old industrial city that has now been encompassed by Chicago suburbs; urban core has very high percentage of Latino immigrants |
|                 | Aurora East SD 131     |                            |                  |   |  |  |
|                 | One Hope United        |                            |                  |   |  |  |
|                 | Indian Prairie SD 204  |                            |                  |   |  |  |
| Bolingbrook     | Valley View CUSD 365U  | S                          | 1,423            | 588   | 41%  | Racially and ethnically mixed; pockets of high poverty   |
| Carpentersville | CUSD 300               | S                          | 1,762            | 634   | 36%  | Large Latino immigrant population; pockets of high poverty   |
|                 | Children's Home & Aid  |                            |                  |   |  |  |
| Chicago         | Chicago Public Schools | U                          | 36,118           | 20,931  | 58%  | Will concentrate services on lowest income neighborhoods, incl. South and West sides of city; population served will be mostly African-American and Latino         |

| Community Name   | Subgrantee(s)          | Geographic Type (U, S, R)* | # of 4 year olds | # of Eligible 4 year olds (Income Below 200% FPL) | % of 4 year olds who are Eligible (Low Income) | Key Community Characteristics  |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---|--|--|
| Cicero           | Through a Child's Eyes | U                          | 1,393            | 914   | 66%  | Heavily Latino suburb of Chicago; large low-income population; 53% of K-12 are ELs   |
| Decatur          | Decatur SD 61          | S                          | 896              | 597   | 67%  | School district is approximately 45% African-American; few ELs   |
| Elgin            | SD U-46                | S                          | 3,431            | 1,732   | 50%  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> largest school district in IL; old industrial city that has now been encompassed by Chicago suburbs; 50% Latino                                    |
| Jefferson County | Mt. Vernon SD 80       | R                          | 481              | 312   | 65%  | Mostly white and low-income; 28% African-American  |
| Joliet           | One Hope United        | U/S                        | 1,283            | 824   | 64%  | 4 <sup>th</sup> largest city in IL; old industrial city that has now been encompassed by Chicago suburbs; urban core has very high percentage of Latino immigrants |

| Community Name              | Subgrantee(s)                        | Geographic Type (U, S, R)* | # of 4 year olds | # of Eligible 4 year olds (Income Below 200% FPL) | % of 4 year olds who are Eligible (Low Income) | Key Community Characteristics  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---|--|--|
| Monroe & St. Clair Counties | Metro East Preschool for             | R                          | 445              | 137   | 31%  | Extraordinarily depressed area, with unemployment rate more than twice national rate; mostly African-American                |
|                             | All                                  | U                          | 669              | 637   | 95%  |  |
| Normal                      | McLean County Unit SD 5              | U/R                        | 1,202            | 391   | 33%  | Mostly white, mixed income. Community is home to Illinois State University   |
| North Chicago               | North Chicago SD 187                 | S                          | 525              | 404   | 77%  | Mix of African-American and Latino; high poverty areas; community is home to Naval Station Great Lakes                       |
| Rock Island                 | Rock Island Reg. Office of Education | R                          | 1,813            | 849   | 47%  | Racially mixed; part of “Quad Cities” along Mississippi River  |
| Rockford                    | Rockford SD 205                      | U                          | 2,744            | 2,017   | 74%  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> largest city in IL; old industrial city with very high poverty in concentrated neighborhoods; racially mixed |
|                             | Rockford Head Start                  | U                          |                  |   |  |  |
| South Suburbs of Chicago    | Lansing SD 258                       | S                          | 1,396            | 877   | 63%  | Predominantly African-American; very high concentrations of poverty in specific  |
|                             | Dolton SD 148                        |                            |                  |   |  |  |

| Community Name          | Subgrantee(s)         | Geographic Type (U, S, R)* | # of 4 year olds | # of <b>Eligible</b> 4 year olds (Income Below 200% FPL) | % of 4 year olds who are Eligible (Low Income) | Key Community Characteristics                     |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|--|--|---|
|                         | Dolton SD 149         |                            |                  |  |  | neighborhoods/apartment complexes                 |
|                         | Posen-Robbins SD143.5 |                            |                  |  |  |   |
| West Chicago            | West Chicago SD 33    | S                          | 553              | 402  | 73%  | Student body is mostly Latino and low-income      |
| Wheaton/<br>Warrenville | CUSD 200              | S                          | 946              | 294  | 31%  | High number of refugees from throughout the world |
| Total                   |                       |                            |                  |  |  |   |

\*U=Urban; S=Suburban; R=Rural LI = Low Income; family income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

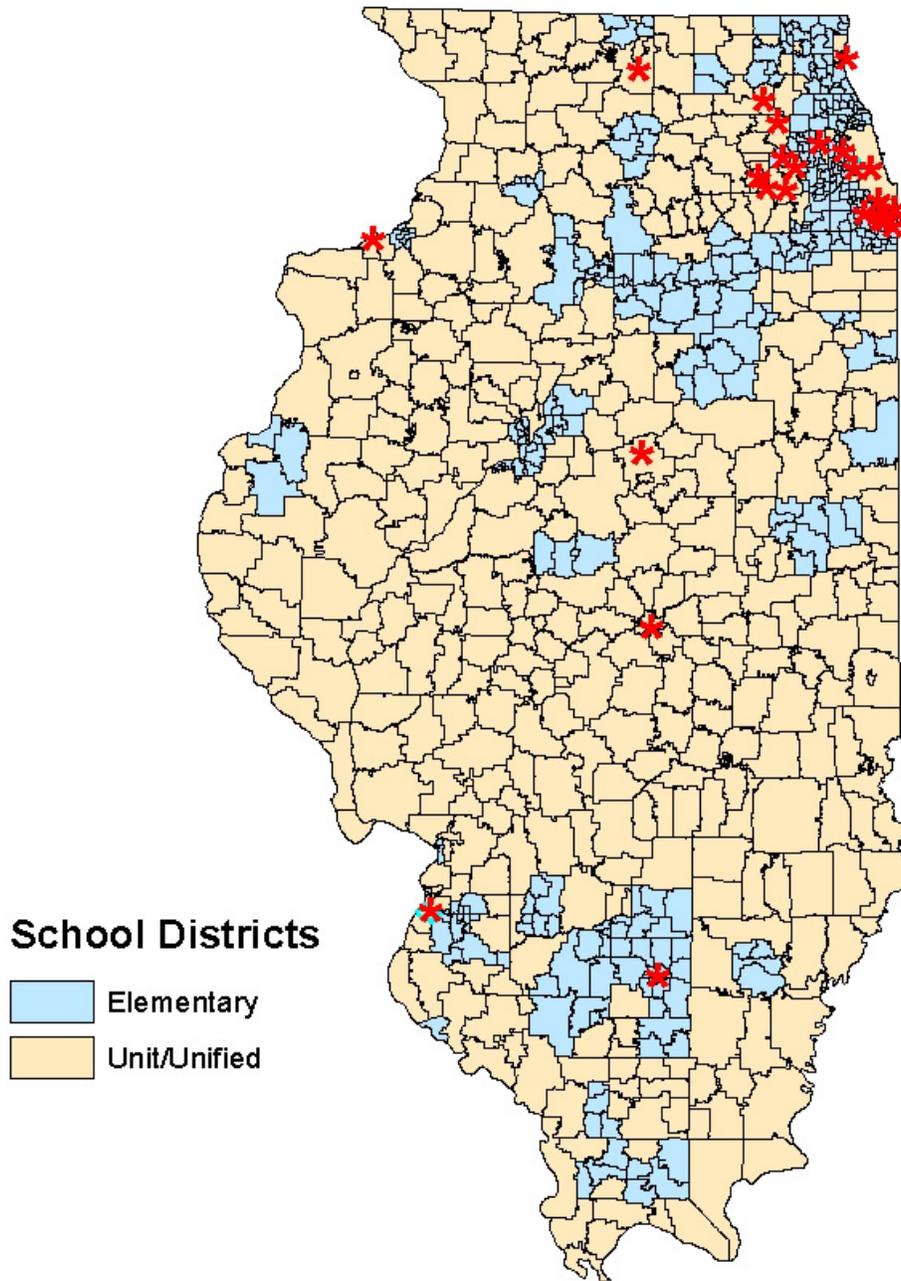
Community Profiles—Part II: Current Service Levels and Number of More at Four Slots

| Community Name              | Subgrantee(s)                | # Low-Income 4 Yr Olds Currently Served in: |              |                  |                                | # of Eligible Children Unserved by Any Program | # PFA-More at Four NEW slots to begin in 2015 | # PFA-More at Four ENHANCED slots to begin in 2015 |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                             |                              | Part-day HS                                 | Part-day PFA | Part-day Title 1 | Full-day, High-Quality Program |  |   |  |
| Addison                     | Addison SD 4                 | -   | 63           | -                | -                              | 158  | 60  |  |
| Aurora                      | Aurora West SD 129           | 153   | 671          | 32               | 40                             | 1,347  | 200   |  |
|                             | Aurora East SD 131           |   |              |                  |                                |  | 100   |  |
|                             | One Hope United              |   |              |                  |                                |  | 40  |  |
|                             | Indian Prairie SD 204        |   |              |                  |                                |  | 20  |  |
| Bolingbrook                 | Valley View CUSD 365U        | 49  | 85           | -                | -                              | 454  | 160   |  |
| Carpentersville             | CUSD 300                     | 62  | 87           | -                | 37                             | 448  | 40  | 120  |
|                             | Children's Home & Aid        |   |              |                  |                                |  | 40  |  |
| Chicago                     | Chicago Public Schools       | 5,190                                       | 8,160        | 213              | 6,500                          | 868  | 600   | 500  |
| Cicero                      | Through a Child's Eyes       | 67  | 641          | -                | -                              | 206  | 100   |  |
| Decatur                     | Decatur SD 61                | 203   | 225          | -                | -                              | 169  | 80  |  |
| Elgin                       | SD U-46                      | 143   | 587          | -                | -                              | 1,002  | 200   |  |
| Jefferson County            | Mt. Vernon SD 80             | 140   | 150          | -                | -                              | 22   | 20  | 20   |
| Joliet                      | One Hope United              | 292   | 360          | -                | -                              | 172  | 40  |  |
| Monroe & St. Clair Counties | Metro East Preschool for All | 11  | 60           | -                | -                              | 66   | 20  |  |
|                             |                              | 125   | 189          | -                | 140                            | 183  | 140   |  |
| Normal                      | McLean County Unit SD        | 234   | 85           | -                | -                              | 72   | 40  |  |

| Community Name           | Subgrantee(s)                        | # Low-Income 4 Yr Olds Currently Served in: |              |                  |                                | # of Eligible Children Unserved by Any Program | # PFA-More at Four NEW slots to begin in 2015 | # PFA-More at Four ENHANCED slots to begin in 2015 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                          |                                      | Part-day HS                                 | Part-day PFA | Part-day Title 1 | Full-day, High-Quality Program |  |   |  |
|                          | 5                                    |   |              |                  |                                |  |   |  |
| North Chicago            | North Chicago SD 187                 | 70  | 80           | -                | -                              | 254  | 80  |  |
| Rock Island              | Rock Island Reg. Office of Education | 376   | 429          | -                | 20                             | 24   | 40  |  |
| Rockford                 | Rockford SD 205                      | 340   | 1,398        | -                | -                              | 279  | 160   |  |
|                          | Rockford Head Start                  |   |              |                  |                                |  | 40  |  |
| South Suburbs of Chicago | Lansing SD 258                       | 120   | 370          | -                | 110                            | 277  | 20  |  |
|                          | Dolton SD 148                        |   |              |                  |                                |  | 60  |  |
|                          | Dolton SD 149                        |   |              |                  |                                |  | 80  |  |
|                          | Posen-Robbins SD143.5                |   |              |                  |                                |  | 40  | 40   |
| West Chicago             | West Chicago SD 33                   | -   | 129          | -                | 71                             | 202  | 120   |  |
| Wheaton/Warrenville      | CUSD 200                             | 50  | 20           | -                | -                              | 224  | 60  |  |
| <b>Total</b>             |                                      |   |              |                  |                                |  | <b>2,600</b>                                  | <b>680</b>   |

Sources: Number of 4 year olds and number of Eligible 4 year olds are from demographic estimates provided by the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map at the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign. Number of Eligible Children Served provided by Subgrantees from their community assessment.

## School Districts in Illinois



The State anticipates continuing to increase the number of Eligible Children to be served in these communities with the PFA More at Four program option in Years 2-4 of the grant. Additional communities may also be selected to participate in the PFA More at Four program option when the state re-competes PFA grants in the spring of 2016, as the State must by law make that competition open to the entire state. If additional communities are selected to participate in the state-funded expansion, Illinois will request an amendment to its Plan for this grant.

### *(3) Outreach and Selection Process*

The State conducted an intensive outreach process to potential Subgrantees for this grant. A statewide needs analysis was completed in May 2014, including a school-district-level analysis of the number of Eligible Children in the community and the number of children currently served in PFA and Head Start programs. From this analysis, 15 school districts were identified as areas especially lacking in services because they had a very low ratio of PFA and Head Start slots to low income three and four year olds and/or had an especially high number and/or percentage of children whose family income is below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level. OECD invited these districts and local community based organizations to regional outreach sessions in June and July. At these sessions, potential Subgrantees were given information about the grant opportunity and an overview of the State's vision for how these grant funds would be used to provide intensive services to the highest need four year olds in the context of a birth-to-third grade continuum of comprehensive services. OECD also conducted outreach through community collaborations in targeted communities, including collaborations funded in part by MIECHV and/or RTT-ELC Innovation Zones resources, to ensure that high need communities were aware of the opportunity. Finally, Early Childhood Capital Grant recipients that were scheduled to open their new facilities in 2014-15 were contacted about the opportunity to be Subgrantees in this proposal.

In July, an open invitation to all PFA grantees was issued by ISBE, requesting communities to express their interest in participating as a Subgrantee in Year One of this proposal (see Appendix page 157 for documents relating to the outreach and selection process). Interest forms were received from 34 communities around the state, several of

which included multiple school districts and/or community-based organizations working together. Interest forms were evaluated on three criteria: 1) quality of partnerships described in the response; 2) degree to which the community demonstrated understanding of the goal of serving the highest need children in a “pipeline” of continuous, high-quality services from birth to third grade; and 3) readiness to implement services in the 2015-16 school year or sooner. Results of the interest form evaluation and the statewide community needs assessment were considered together to determine the preliminary list of 24 participating Subgrantees. The past performance of these potential Subgrantees in PFA monitoring and ExceleRate Illinois was reviewed to ensure that these programs were well prepared to implement a high-quality program.

With support from the State’s philanthropic partners, OECD provided extensive technical assistance to these preliminarily identified Subgrantees to help them plan their services, strengthen partnerships for continuous birth-to-third grade services, and develop their budgets. Shortly after the federal application was released, OECD held a webinar with the Subgrantees to provide additional information about the State’s vision and plan, the grant application process, and the additional information OECD would need from each district. Each Subgrantee was assigned a consultant who conducted a site visit and provided telephone support as needed throughout the application and budget development process. Subgrantees were brought together for a technical assistance workshop day in early September, and were required to submit a proposed plan and budget by mid-September. OECD reviewed these plans and budgets in consultation with the ISBE Early Childhood Division and made the final selection of Subgrantees for Year One of this grant.

OECD also held a webinar specifically for Head Start program directors throughout the state to explain the State’s plan and its vision for increasing access to intensive, highly effective preschool services for those children with the highest needs. Four Head Start programs are participating in the first year of the State Plan (in Chicago, Rockford, Mount Vernon, and Bolingbrook). The State expects that Head Start programs in the majority of the selected communities will participate in More at Four as it expands.

The State anticipates that Subgrantees will be funded with the federal funding throughout the 2015-18 grant period for those classrooms that are included in Year One

of the grant. Additional expansion slots beginning in 2016, 2017, and 2018 will be funded with state funding through the ECBG. As such, ISBE will need to conduct a grant competition for these expanded slots, following the ECBG Rules, as part of the overall planned expansion of ECBG each year described in Section A above. The State anticipates that its private sector partners, including philanthropy, will take the lead on providing outreach and support to potential applicants in this grant competition process as it has done in many other ECBG grant competitions over the past decade to ensure that all high-need communities in the state are aware of the new program model and the opportunity to provide more intensive, continuous services to those children with the highest needs. This process has proven especially effective in past competitions in ensuring that communities with high numbers of Latino immigrant families—which are among Illinois’ most likely communities to lack preschool services—apply for and are ready to implement new Preschool for All programs.

#### *(4) Ambitious and Achievable Targets*

As shown in the Budget Tables, Illinois will subgrant 95% of the total federal funds over the four years of the project period to participating Subgrantees.

Table A, Part III shows the State’s ambitious, achievable targets for expansion of new slots and improvement of existing slots. Illinois has successfully implemented large-scale expansion of PFA in the past, most notably increasing the number of children served by 30%, or approximately 23,000 children, from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2005 to SFY 2009. The State is confident that the plan it has developed can be successfully implemented with high quality. (Note: Please see Section G for explanation of Per Pupil Expenditures in Table A.)

New slots: As the targets indicate, the majority of slots will be new slots. Most of these slots will be funded only through this grant and/or the matching funds for this grant. Some of these new slots will be placed in community-based child care programs that blend/braid these funds with Child Care Assistance funding to provide a full-work-day, full-year program. This model has been successfully implemented within the existing PFA program. Funds from this grant (including matching funds) will only be used to pay for expenses that exceed the basic operating expenses of the child care program. These

child care center slots are considered new slots as they have not previously been part of the State Preschool Program. Note: It is expected that a somewhat limited number of More at Four slots will be placed in child care center programs as the current PFA program—blended and braided with Child Care Assistance funds—has proven to be a good match for the needs of these children whose families are working or attending school.

In addition, some of these new slots are anticipated to be placed in Head Start programs, where the grant/matching funds will be used to extend the program day to at least the length of the local first grade day (all districts in Illinois provide at least five hours for first grade), to raise teacher salaries to ensure a Licensed Professional Educator with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education is teaching each class and that his/her salary is comparable to those of teachers in the local district(s), and to support evidence-based professional development for the instructional staff.

Improved slots: Approximately 22% of the total More at Four slots to be funded through these grant/matching funds will be improved PFA slots. Funds in these programs will be used to extend the program from half-day (typically 2.5 hours per day) to Full Day and to provide Comprehensive Services. These improved slots will be implemented in communities that already have high levels of service for Eligible Children in part-day PFA, and where there are many children with very high needs whose needs would best be met by a full school day program with Comprehensive Services.

|                                    | 2015  | 2016  | 2017   | 2018   |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Entirely new slots                 | 1,740 | 3,380 | 6,120  | 8,000  |
| New slots combined with Head Start | 500   | 860   | 1,300  | 1,700  |
| New slots combined with CCAP       | 360   | 440   | 800    | 1,060  |
| Enhanced/Extended PFA slots        | 680   | 1,420 | 2,200  | 3,000  |
| Total slots                        | 3,280 | 6,100 | 10,420 | 13,760 |

*(5) Sustaining High-Quality Preschool Programs After the Grant Period*

As described above, the State has developed a five-year plan for the implementation and expansion of PFA More at Four programs as part of its overall Birth to Five Initiative.

This plan includes the state sustaining in the second half of SFY 2019 and in SFY 2020 those programs that were funded through the federal funds under this grant. All Subgrantees have also indicated their plans to continue to contribute any local matching funds (including in-kind contribution) through SFY 2020 to ensure programs are sustained.

### Section D Ambitious and Achievable Plan

Goal: Provide High-Quality Preschool to 13,760 Additional Eligible Children, including 3,280 in Year One, 6,100 in Year Two, 10,420 in Year Three, and 13,760 in Year Four.

| <b>ACTIVITY D-1: EXECUTE SUBGRANTS FOR YEAR ONE</b>   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <i>Rationale:</i> Executed subgrants will provide necessary funding for implementation of PFA More at Four programs.  |                 |  |
| <i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up:</i> The communities in which the services will be implemented in Year One are listed in the chart above.                       |                 |  |
| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>                  |
| <b>1: Develop formal ISBE grant application</b> for programs to complete to receive funding in SFY 15   | Oct 2014*       | ISBE Division of Early Childhood (DEC) |
| <b>2: Complete formal ISBE grant application</b> for SFY15 funds, including budget in ISBE required format  | Nov 2014*       | Subgrantees                            |
| <b>3: Review SFY15 subgrants</b> applications and complete provisional approval process, pending notification of receipt of federal funding award           | Dec 2014*       | ISBE DEC & OECD                        |
| <b>4: Award SFY15 subgrants</b> , which will include funding for services, planning activities, minor remodeling, and purchase of materials in Jan-Jun 2014 | Jan 2015        | ISBE                                   |

|   |              |                 |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>5: Develop ISBE “E-Grant” application</b> for programs to receive funding in SFY16   | Jan-Feb 2015 | ISBE DEC        |
| <b>6: Complete “E-Grant” application</b> for funding for SFY16  | Mar-Apr 2015 | Subgrantees     |
| <b>7: Review SFY16 subgrant applications</b> and approve subgrantee’s plans and budgets   | May-Jun 2015 | ISBE DEC & OECD |
| <b>8: Award SFY16 subgrants</b> which will include funding for services Jul-Dec 2015 and (pending award of 2016 federal funding to State) services for Jan-Jun 2016 | Jul 2016     | ISBE            |
| *Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether it’s application for this grant is successful                                     |              |                 |

| <b>ACTIVITY D-2: EXECUTE SUBGRANTS FOR YEAR TWO</b>  |                 |                       |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Rationale:</i> Preschool for All funds will be re-competed for FY17 funding, and state matching funds for More at Four will be granted through this competition.  |                 |                       |
| <i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up:</i> The State anticipates that all Year One Subgrantees will continue their program in Year Two of the project and that several will expand their services. In addition, new participating communities may be identified through the recompetition process for PFA. |                 |                       |
| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>   | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
| <b>1: Develop report template</b> for programs to report on their initial implementation of the program  | Feb 2015        | OECD & ISBE DEC       |
| <b>2: Complete initial implementation report</b> (due date will be based on whether services begin in Feb/Mar or Aug/Sep)  | Apr or Oct 2015 | Subgrantees           |
| <b>3: Revise PFA Request for Proposals (RFP)</b> to reflect new More at Four program option  | Oct-Dec 2015    | ISBE DEC              |

|   |                       |                    |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>4: Conduct statewide outreach</b> about the More at Four program option to ensure all potential PFA grantees understand this new program model | Dec 2015-<br>Feb 2016 | OECD & ISBE<br>DEC |
| <b>5: Complete annual needs assessment</b> to determine areas of state most in need of expansion slots  | Feb-Mar 2016          | OECD               |
| <b>6: Release PFA RFP</b> for re-competition of grant funds, including expanded state investment in PFA More at Four and “regular” PFA            | Mar 2016              | ISBE DEC           |
| <b>7: Release annual re-application</b> for subgrant of federal funds   | Mar 2016              | ISBE DEC           |
| <b>8: Develop annual report format</b> for FY16 implementation  | Apr 2016              | OECD & ISBE<br>DEC |
| <b>9: Submit annual re-application</b> for subgrants of federal funds   | May 2016              | Subgrantees        |
| <b>10: Review PFA proposals and award grants</b> that will be from state funds  | Jun 2016              | ISBE DEC           |
| <b>11: Amend State Plan</b> if necessary to reflect additional high need communities where More at Four program will be expanded                  | Jun 2016              | OECD               |
| <b>12: Awards subgrants for FY 17</b> that will be from federal funds   | Jun 2016              | ISBE DEC           |
| <b>13: Complete and submit annual implementation report</b> for FY 16   | Jul 2016              | Subgrantees        |

### ACTIVITY D-3: EXECUTE SUBGRANTS FOR YEAR THREE

*Rationale:* Grants for FY 18 will need to be executed, including grants for further expansion with the state’s increased matching contribution.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* The State anticipates that all Year Two Subgrantees will continue their program in Year Three of the project and that several will expand their services. In addition, new participating communities may be identified through the PFA competition.

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Release PFA RFP</b> for competition for expanded state investment in PFA More at Four and “regular” PFA                   | Mar 2017        | ISBE DEC              |
| <b>2: Release annual re-application</b> for subgrant of federal funds   | Mar 2017        | ISBE DEC              |
| <b>3: Develop annual report format</b> for FY17 implementation  | Apr 2017        | OECD & ISBE DEC       |
| <b>4: Submit annual re-application</b> for subgrants of federal funds   | May 2017        | Subgrantees           |
| <b>5: Review PFA proposals and award grants</b> that will be from state funds   | Jun 2017        | ISBE DEC              |
| <b>6: Amend State Plan</b> if necessary to reflect additional high need communities where More at Four program will be expanded | Jun 2017        | OECD                  |
| <b>7: Awards subgrants for FY 17</b> that will be from federal funds  | Jun 2017        | ISBE DEC              |
| <b>8: Complete and submit annual implementation report</b> for FY 17  | Jul 2017        | Subgrantees           |

#### **ACTIVITY D-4: EXECUTE SUBGRANTS FOR YEAR FOUR**

*Rationale:* Grants for FY 19 will need to be executed, including grants for further expansion with the state’s increased matching contribution.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* The State anticipates that all Year Three Subgrantees will continue their program in Year Four of the project and that several will expand their services. In addition, new participating communities may be identified through the competition process for new PFA funds.

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Release PFA RFP</b> for competition for expanded state investment in PFA More at Four and “regular” PFA | Mar 2018        | ISBE DEC              |

|  |          |                 |
|--|----------|-----------------|
| <b>2: Release annual re-application</b> for subgrant of federal funds and develop process to ensure that slots are funded through expanded state funds for second half of 2018-19 program year | Mar 2018 | ISBE DEC        |
| <b>3: Develop annual report format</b> for FY18 implementation   | Apr 2018 | OECD & ISBE DEC |
| <b>8: Submit annual re-application</b> for subgrants of federal funds and continuation state funds   | May 2018 | Subgrantees     |
| <b>9: Review PFA proposals and award grants</b> that will be from state funds  | Jun 2018 | ISBE DEC        |
| <b>10: Amend State Plan</b> if necessary to reflect additional high need communities where More at Four program will be expanded   | Jun 2018 | OECD            |
| <b>10: Awards subgrants for FY 17</b> that will be from federal funds for Jul-Dec 2018 and state funds Jan-Jun 2019  | Jun 2018 | ISBE DEC        |
| <b>11: Complete and submit annual implementation report</b> for FY 18  | Jul 2018 | Subgrantees     |

## **E. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships**

### *(1) The Roles and Responsibilities of the State and Subgrantees*

The roles and responsibilities of the State and of each Subgrantee are clearly articulated in the preliminary MOUs that were signed by each Subgrantee (see Exhibit I, page 87 of MOU attachment).

### *(2) Implementation Plan & Subgrantee Capacity*

The Ambitious and Achievable Plan in Section D details the State’s implementation plan for expanded High-Quality Preschool Programs.

The State has selected the Subgrantees for Year One of the project period according to the criteria presented above. Each Subgrantee has demonstrated its organizational capacity to implement a High-Quality Preschool Program by successfully implementing a PFA program and/or by achieving a Gold Circle of Quality rating in ExceleRate Illinois (See Appendix on page 60). Early Learning Providers with which Subgrantees may contract to provide services have demonstrated their organizational capacity to implement the program in partnership with a Subgrantee by achieving a Silver or Gold Circle of Quality rating in ExceleRate Illinois.

All Subgrantees for Year One were required to provide OECD and ISBE with a detailed plan for where the program will be located, including a plan for ensuring that the classrooms, playgrounds, and other spaces where children will be served will be safe and appropriate environments for four-year-old children. OECD and ISBE have preliminarily reviewed and approved all requests for funding for minor remodeling, furniture, and equipment needed to ensure the environments are appropriate and ready for preschool services to begin no later than September 2015.

### *(3) Minimizing Subgrantee Administrative Costs*

The current Administrative Rules for the ECBG include limitations on administrative expenditures, and these rules will be extended to programs funded through federal funds under this grant:

The budget shall specify that no more than 5 percent of the total grant award shall be used for administrative and general expenses not directly attributed to program activities, except that a higher limit not to exceed 10 percent may be negotiated with an applicant that has provided evidence that the excess administrative expenses are beyond its control and that it has exhausted all available and reasonable remedies to comply with the limitation. -23 Ill. Adm. Code 235.20 (c)  
(14)

### *(4) Monitoring Subgrantees and Early Learning Providers*

PFA More at Four programs will be monitored in the first full school year of implementation according to existing ISBE policy for PFA. The monitoring process

(described in (C)(2)(a)) will include all partner organizations with which a Subgrantee may subcontract to operate the preschool program (e.g., child care centers or other local school districts). Subgrantee expenditures will be monitored by the ISBE Early Childhood Division in accordance with existing ECBG policy and ISBE's State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures. In addition, programs will be required to participate in quarterly monitoring calls with OECD to review progress in implementing the program plan, including their community-level efforts to develop a more continuous system of services for children with the highest needs from birth through grade three.

Subgrantees that subcontract with other Early Learning Providers to provide services will be required to develop and submit to ISBE and OECD for approval before June 30, 2015 a plan for monitoring those subcontractors on at least a monthly basis to ensure that the program is being implemented as intended.

#### *(5) Coordinating Plans Between State and Subgrantees*

As described in Section (C)(1)(b), Subgrantees will be required to submit a detailed program plan each year as part of their application for continuing funds. This application will include information about the Subgrantee's plans for assessments, instructional tools, family engagement, linkages with other community resources to provide families with Comprehensive Services, preschool-to-third grade alignment efforts, and professional development. These plans will be reviewed and approved by ISBE Early Childhood Division Principal Consultants.

ISBE has developed a robust communication system to keep PFA grantees, including the new More at Four programs, informed of the state-level efforts described in Section (C)(1), including efforts around professional development, workforce and leadership development, and community systems development. This communication system includes an email list serve, a special section of the weekly State Superintendent's newsletter to school district superintendents, a very comprehensive website, and conferences and webinars for PFA administrators. In addition, each PFA program is assigned to a Principal Consultant who regularly communicates with the program and

ensures that the program is aware of all of the services offered by ISBE and its many state-level contractors dedicated to supporting high-quality program implementation.

OECD has also developed a communication plan to keep PFA programs up to date on ExceleRate Illinois and the supports that are available to all early childhood programs through the RTT-ELC Grant.

CPS and ISBE have a special relationship. As the third largest school district in the nation, CPS operates its own substantial system of supports for high-quality preschool program implementation, both within its schools and in community based organizations with which it contracts for PFA and Prevention Initiative services. ISBE, OECD, and CPS staff members coordinate efforts and ensure that programs in Chicago are receiving consistent messages and are well supported as they develop and implement programs.

*(6) Coordinating With, But Not Supplanting, Existing Services*

As described in Section B, Illinois has a long history of supporting blended and braided funding for high-quality early childhood programs. IDHS has developed a simple process by which a program can apply for recognition as a Collaboration Program, i.e. one that provides a full-workday, full-year program that is enhanced by Head Start, Early Head Start, Prevention Initiative, or PFA funding. Programs must demonstrate how the additional funding enhances the program by improving quality (lowering group size and/or ratio, improving staff qualifications and compensation, enhancing curriculum and educational experiences, and/or providing comprehensive services) and must demonstrate how their program is coordinated with other early childhood programs in the local community. Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) participants enrolled in Collaboration Programs enjoy several benefits, including annual redetermination of eligibility for CCAP, 90 day (instead of 30 day) job loss grace period, and indefinite eligibility if participation in the collaboration program is part of the parent's current TANF Responsibility and Services Plan. Early/Head Start grantees follow appropriate cost allocation procedures to ensure that the Early/Head Start funding supplements do not supplant CCAP funding. Similarly, ISBE (or in Chicago, CPS) reviews program budgets and cost allocation procedures to ensure that PFA and/or Prevention Initiative funding

supplements do not supplant CCAP funding. This same process will be followed for any collaboration program funded for PFA More at Four services.

Subgrantees are encouraged to develop collaborative models with Head Start programs. For these programs, ISBE will carefully review budgets to ensure that PFA More at Four funds are supplementing and not supplanting Head Start funds.

School districts commonly blend and braid Title I funds and Special Education funds with PFA funding. In all cases, careful cost allocation is required to ensure there is no supplanting of funds.

Of the 24 Subgrantees to be funded through this grant, 15 are implementing a collaboration with Head Start or a community based organization for the More at Four program (or are themselves a community-based organization), and an additional five are in communities where another community-based organization will be implementing More at Four. All Subgrantees will be involved with the intensive community systems development activities detailed under Competitive Preference Priority 2 (Section CPP-2).

#### *(7) Economically Diverse, Inclusive Settings*

The current PFA program does not have an income-based eligibility requirement for individual students. In SFY 2014, 59.3% of PFA participants were reported to be eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, the only measure of family income ISBE currently collects. Although ISBE staff suspect this percentage may significantly underestimate low income children's participation in the program (as some schools may not collect eligibility information on part-day students), the data do demonstrate that large numbers of children participate in mixed-income preschool programs throughout the state.

The Chicago Public Schools, as part of the Mayor's Chicago: Ready to Learn! Initiative (see Appendix on page 108) has provided local funding to increase access to preschool for children across income levels. Children with incomes below 200% of FPL attend CPS Head Start or PFA programs at no charge, and children from higher income families participate under a sliding scale tuition schedule. Similarly, many districts around the state operate blended program models in which children with IEPs, at-risk children receiving PFA, and tuition-paying children attend programs together in the same classrooms, with all costs allocated to the appropriate funding streams.

For the PFA More at Four option, Subgrantees will be required to identify and serve those children with the highest needs in their communities. Specifically, as noted in the Sample Weighted Eligibility Criteria Form in Appendix on page 40, children who are homeless, who are wards of the state, or who demonstrate developmental delays in two or more domains on a research-based screening tool are to be given priority in enrollment for the program. Subgrantees will be encouraged to serve children in mixed-income settings, provided they appropriately allocate costs such that the federal and matching state funds cover only the costs for Eligible Children.

Subgrantees will be required to identify, accept, and appropriately support children with disabilities in their PFA More at Four programs.

*(8) Delivering High-Quality Preschool Programs to Eligible Children including Those in Need of Additional Supports.*

More at Four will explicitly target children and their families who are the most at-risk, fragile, and isolated and will develop recruitment strategies to reach and enroll them and develop innovative program model components to keep them engaged. Through extensive community outreach and the establishment of referral pipelines with other early education providers and social service or community agencies that target hard to reach or at-risk populations, communities will identify, assess, enroll, and serve children with multiple risk factors as defined by ISBE and the ELC. These risk factors include poverty or deep poverty, homelessness, child welfare involvement, developmental delays or disabilities, English not spoken in the home, low parental education, parent who was a teen at child's birth, and incarcerated parent, as well as other factors that may be identified by the local community. Those children with the most significant number of risk factors will take precedence over other children with a smaller number of risk factors, and it is anticipated that children enrolled in the More at Four program will have a minimum of twenty "points" on the Sample Weighted Eligibility Check List (or a similar level of risk on a locally-developed eligibility weighting system). (See Appendix on page 40.) More at Four programs will be required to document that at least 80% of enrolled children meet that minimum threshold. Waiting lists will be maintained so that in the event that a slot becomes available children on the waiting list will be given priority.

Special consideration will be given to ensuring that children from linguistically isolated families and families that experience significant barriers based on language are offered culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Currently 21.2% of the children in PFA programs are identified as English Learners, and it is anticipated that a similar percentage will be enrolled in More at Four programs.

Based on past experience in PFA, programs have noted that it is common to have children with very high needs come to the attention of the school district in the first two months of school, after all PFA slots have been filled for the year. Indeed, the DCFS School Readiness Office, which is charged with ensuring that all preschool-aged children in foster care are enrolled in preschool, has noted that a lack of openings in preschool programs is a common barrier to ensuring these children are served. For this reason, More at Four programs will be encouraged to reserve 5-10% of their program slots to be filled during the first two months of the school year. These slots will be filled immediately by any child who is homeless or in foster care. If the slots are still not filled by November 1, the program will enroll the highest need children from the waiting list. This process will supplement the existing practice of programs managing enrollment to ensure that any child with disabilities whose IEP indicates a need for preschool services is able to enroll promptly in the PFA (or if appropriate, self-contained special education) program. Programs will maintain contact with agencies serving homeless families and children in foster care throughout the year, and if a homeless or foster child is identified as needing preschool services after all spots are filled, programs will make every effort to keep contact with the family and place that child in a classroom as soon as an opening becomes available.

Illinois' robust network of 0-3 home visiting and center-based programs will serve as a direct link in coordinating recruitment and enrollment with programs in the community to ensure children and families with the highest need are identified early and supported through the preschool recruitment and enrollment process. More at Four program staff including family support specialists, parent educators, and curriculum coordinators will assist with the recruitment of families. Eligible children will also be identified at community "Child Find" screenings held for children birth to five by all PFA and/or Early Intervention programs throughout the state. PFA programs already coordinate with

their local Child and Family Connections (Early Intervention services) to assure seamless transitions for families moving from EI to PFA programs.

Maintaining enrollment and ensuring excellent attendance for children with very high needs is a key goal for PFA More at Four programs. Programs will have a dedicated Parent Educator or Family Support Specialist at a ratio of no less than 1:100 children (most programs have a lower ratio), and most programs have included additional supports such as paraprofessional School Community Representatives or Parent Ambassadors to assist in meeting families' comprehensive needs to facilitate continued enrollment and attendance. A recent analysis by the Child Parent Center Expansion grant (an Investing in Innovation, or i3, grant) has shown that support from Parent Educators and School Community Representatives, together with implementing a full-school-day schedule, significantly improved attendance among preschool children with very high needs. Programs will be required to submit attendance data for the More at Four programs, and adjustments to the program requirements for family support services will be made based on what the State learns is necessary to effectively ensure retention and strong attendance for children with very high needs.

*(9) Ensuring Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Outreach and Communication*

The State of Illinois has developed a *Hard to Reach Toolkit for Programs Serving Preschool Children* (Appendix beginning on page 164), which will guide More at Four providers through each step in their charge of recruiting, enrolling, and serving the hardest to reach families within their communities, including children who are English Learners. The toolkit offers guidance identifying community need and offering strategies for outreach, transportation, and parent support and involvement and will be an important resource for school districts and community based centers.

In addition to the strategies for identifying and recruiting Eligible Children described in Section (E)(8), communities will take special care to go beyond census data to identify pockets of linguistically isolated families that the programs can then target with culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach strategies. Additional resources for this data are school districts that collect data on English Learners beginning in preschool, Head Start programs, and immigrant serving community-based organizations. Refugee resettlement

agencies and Illinois Department of Human Services Refugee & Immigrant Services have data on immigrant communities that may help identify locations and characteristics of linguistically isolated communities to target for recruitment, and these organizations have historically been strong collaborators with early learning providers in the state.

Programs will implement activities to engage families with limited English proficiency to encourage and maintain enrollment; support family engagement in the program; and strengthen families' capacity to support children's learning and development at home. These activities may include partnering with immigrant-serving organizations; having a dedicated bilingual liaison to work on outreach and recruitment; providing translation or interpretation services; and developing materials in multiple languages. Program communications regarding children's educational needs, progress, and concerns will be presented in the language most readily understood by the family, which is an existing requirement under the PFA program.

Illinois' plan also takes into account the need to ensure the quality of preschool programs for culturally and linguistically diverse children. There are multiple program requirements under the existing PFA program for English Learners, as described in Section A and in the explanation of the bilingual education rules included in Appendix starting on page 34. PFA programs that serve English Learners must screen and identify these children, provide native language instruction or support, provide ESL, use ESL or bilingual endorsed early childhood teachers, have a district-level bilingual parent advisory committee, include culturally and historically relevant content in the curriculum, and align their comprehensive services with the 2013 Early English Language Development Standards, 2.5 -5.5 years (2013), published by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System on behalf of the WIDA Consortium.

Decades of research in child development affirms the importance of play in the early years as the primary vehicle through which children build a strong foundation for linguistic, cognitive, social, and emotional concepts. Play-based classrooms for children whose home language is not English will allow time for observation, exploration, problem solving, experimentation, and discussion. These hands-on experiences will build a solid foundation for language development and school success. The PFA monitoring process includes an assessment of the degree to which classroom environments are

culturally sensitive and contain rich amounts of materials, books, pictures, and print in languages of the families.

Young children also learn language through relationships with their caregivers and peers during daily routines. Illinois is one of very few states that continue to promote and require native language instruction and support. The State acknowledges the role that language plays not only for communication, but also for children's social-emotional development. Children will be encouraged to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and ideas using their home language to build a stronger foundation of concepts and vocabulary and to develop strong, stable, supportive relationships with adults. This foundation will support children as they learn, write, read, and develop another language. Classroom staff and families will provide support by using the child's home language by:

- Talking with the children about new experiences in their home language
- Reading to the child in their home language
- Singing culturally-appropriate songs, rhymes, and chants
- Helping with everyday classroom routines and activities in their home language
- Talking about traditions in their home language

These strategies will be used within More at Four programs to ensure that the learning needs of targeted, high-risk ELs will continue to be met. To the greatest extent possible, children will transition into kindergarten programs with the same language of instruction as in preschool to ensure continuity of learning. In addition, programs will work with community partners to ensure that family education, recruitment, and enrollment efforts are culturally and linguistically appropriate and tailored to the needs of all families.

#### Family Engagement

Through family and community engagement, More at Four will focus on family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, families as lifelong educators, parent education, family engagement in transitions, and families as advocates and leaders.

Program staff will implement a range of parent education and support services including

- An intake and orientation process that informs parents about the scope of the program and solicits their on-going participation
- Regularly scheduled opportunities for dialogue about parents' and caregivers'

hopes and goals for their children, and about their children's progress in the program. This dialogue will be integrated into parent-teacher conferences that review child assessment information and inform teachers' planning

- Discussions of child development, health and parent-child relationships, both in parent meetings and in conversations with program staff.

In addition to reflecting the ISBE Family Engagement Framework, program goals will reflect the desired outcomes described in the Head Start Family and Community Engagement Framework:

- Family well-being: Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security
- Positive parent-child relationships: Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development
- Families as lifelong educators: Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities
- Families as learners: Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals
- Family engagement in transitions: Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, from birth to kindergarten and through elementary school
- Family connections to peers and community: Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life
- Families as advocates and leaders: Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

As community systems develop through the state and regional supports described in Section CPP-2, parents will learn about and use a wide range of services and supports. These include:

- Opportunities to network with other parents and learn about community resources—activities that can lead to employment and make community resources available to improve family life
- Counseling and concrete help in times of need, including referrals to employment services, food pantries, housing agencies, health services, Strengthening Families Illinois workshops, *Abriendo Puertas* workshops, and other services
- Opportunities for involvement and leadership
- Regular opportunities for parents and their children to have fun together – family picnics, field trips, visits from performing groups, etc.

#### Parent Advisory Councils

In an effort to build parent leadership within programs and in the community, Parent Advisory Councils will be created (if they do not already exist) to provide family members with the opportunity to work with the school leaders in planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of the school programs. Parents will receive letters informing them of the opportunity to be a member of the Parent Advisory Council, teachers will speak with families about the opportunity, and parents will recruit other parents. Councils will be created to provide leadership opportunities for parents, and will also include classroom teachers, school and center leadership, and community members. The council will help to make sure parents and stakeholders have the chance to voice suggestions and concerns throughout the school year to ensure families are being served at a level that meets their needs. Schools and centers will be encouraged to build connections between parent leaders within their programs and community-level groups including local collaborations.

#### *(10) Ensuring Strong Partnerships Between LEAs and Other Early Learning Providers*

##### *(a) Partnering with LEAs and Other Early Learning Providers to Ensure Successful Transitions*

As noted in (D)(3), the State selected communities in part based upon their existing and proposed relationships between school districts and community-based Early Learning Providers. Twelve of the 18 selected communities have included community-based providers in their plan for More at Four, and an additional five already include community-based providers in their existing PFA program. In the remaining community, North Chicago, the school district is committed to working with community-based providers and the local Naval Station as they plan for future expansion of services.

In all selected communities, both the school district and local community-based providers have indicated a willingness to work together to identify and serve children with very high needs. In most of the communities, there is already a strong early childhood collaboration that shares professional development opportunities, resources, and referrals. As described in Competitive Preference Priority 2, the State will invest in a system of support to local collaborations that will ensure that the remaining communities also develop a local system that promotes sharing of resources between school districts and community-based Early Learning Providers.

Each of the selected communities has developed detailed plans to ensure that children make a smooth transition between preschool and kindergarten. These plans include, at a minimum, annual meetings between local preschool and kindergarten teachers, joint professional development opportunities for teachers across grades, transition planning with families that includes an opportunity for families to meet elementary school personnel, and transitional opportunities for children to learn about the school they will be attending in kindergarten. Kindergarten transition information will be provided to parents in their preferred language.

*(b) Coordinating and Collaborating with LEAs and Other Early Learning Providers*

Professional Development: Illinois has developed a strong system of professional development supports for early learning providers. With funding from ISBE, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning and STAR NET provide a rich array of training opportunities for staff in PFA programs throughout the state, including those in community-based centers. In addition, all early learning programs, whether school- or community-based, can access trainings provided through the statewide network of Child

Care Resource and Referral Agencies, including many trainings that are available on-line and/or in multiple languages. Over the past several years, both The Center and the CCR&Rs have been moving away from single-session workshops and towards more effective professional development models that include multi-session series with opportunities between sessions for intentional “practice” implementation of new skills and opportunities to reflect on that practice with instructors.

The Center will implement a special series of supports for teachers who are new to PFA. High-quality preschool classrooms require teachers with both core knowledge about best practices in early education and unique skills for working with high-risk preschoolers and their families, along with additional knowledge about services provided by community partners and braided/blended funding requirements. A one day face-to-face New PFA Teacher’s Academy (Academy) will be implemented to enable the newest cadre of teachers to create their own regional network of new practitioners and enhance their individual skill sets. In addition to keynote addresses from leading experts in the field, the Academy will include breakout sessions that provide targeted overviews of foundational elements of high-quality early childhood education and of Illinois’ early learning system. The Academy will be followed-up by a regionally-based webinar series to provide ongoing support and networking. The Academy will supplement and not replace the expectation support for teachers’ skill development through district level training/mentoring and other state funded trainings.

Illinois is in the midst of implementing a significant shift in the way it provides support to early learning programs seeking to improve their quality. Whereas in the past the State supported many efforts directed chiefly at teachers and other classroom level staff, Illinois and its contractors are now developing many more supports for instructional leaders in programs. These leaders are being trained and supported in implementing professional learning communities within their programs, through which they will provide highly effective embedded professional development centered on teachers’ instructional practice.

The More at Four program requirements include having a dedicated instructional leader (e.g., Curriculum Coordinator, Master Teacher, etc.) at a ratio of no less than 1.0 FTE per 10 classrooms. In the communities where community-based providers are

participating in the More at Four program, the Subgrantee's instructional leader will provide embedded professional development support to the teachers in the community-based program together with the site-level leadership at the programs.

Instructional leaders will receive support in providing professional development around all relevant topics, including early learning and kindergarten standards, assessments, curricula, and culturally and linguistically responsive strategies to help families build protective factors, build parents' capacity to support their children's learning and development, and engage parents as decision-makers in their children's education. Intensive supports for instructional leaders will be provided through the Going for Gold and Lead.Learn.Excel. professional development programs described in Section (C)(1)(f).

As described in Section C, ISBE will conduct an assessment of professional development needs among More at Four Subgrantees in the first few months of 2014, and will develop a plan to expand the professional development supports provided by its existing contractors in light of this assessment. Similarly, CPS will develop a plan for enhanced professional development supports for More at Four programs within Chicago.

Comprehensive Services: Each Subgrantee will be required to provide comprehensive services to the children enrolled in More at Four programs and to their families. Specifically, programs will ensure that every child is screened for vision and hearing difficulties, receives a comprehensive physical examination by a physician at least annually, and receives all indicated immunizations, and is screened for mental health and social-emotional delays and disabilities. Programs will be required to develop partnerships with local community resources to ensure that children are referred to and receive needed health and mental health services. Programs will be funded to either employ or contract with nurses and mental health consultants to support health and mental health services at the More at Four program.

Strong support for children's social-emotional development will be critical to the success of the More at Four program. Because the program is designed to serve those children with highest needs, it is anticipated that many children will present with challenging behaviors, and teachers will need support in developing skills to effectively manage those behaviors and to promote healthy social-emotional development.

Subgrantees have developed plans for providing these supports to teachers. For example, CPS will hire three Social Emotional Learning Coordinators to work with school-level instructional leaders and teachers to implement effective strategies for supporting children with behavioral and/or mental health needs. While final plans are still being developed for this new initiative, it is anticipated that CPS will follow an approach similar to the Pyramid Model developed by Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), which emphasizes effective classroom preventive practices and explicit instruction in social and emotional regulation skills. As part of its needs assessment for professional development, ISBE will assess the need among other Subgrantees for additional training and supports for implementing the Pyramid Model and will develop a plan to provide these supports.

In addition to full-class practices and instruction, the Pyramid Model also includes intensive individualized interventions for children who display ongoing challenging behavior. Implementing positive behavior support for these children often requires ongoing, relationship-based support for the teacher from a mental health provider skilled in early childhood mental health interventions. Illinois has developed a highly effective approach to mental health consultation in child care, early intervention and preschool, and as noted above, programs have included funding for mental health consultation in their annual budgets. Trained early childhood mental health consultants are available for programs to contract with throughout the state, and additional training and support for mental health consultants will continue to be provided through a partnership among IDHS, ISBE, and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership.

The State's approach to supporting culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement opportunities is described in detail above in Section (C)(9).

Each Subgrantee (or its subcontractor) will be required to provide meals and snacks to children appropriate for the program day (minimum of breakfast, lunch, and one snack). Meals and snacks will be aligned with Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines. Nutrition education will be integrated into the classroom curriculum, and parent education services will include nutrition education.

PFA guidelines require that children have an opportunity for active gross motor play daily, including outdoor play except in cases of very inclement weather, and that screen

time be limited to no more than 30 minutes per day. Videos are to be used only rarely, and only when directly linked to curriculum goals.

More at Four programs must maintain formal partnerships with community-based organizations to which they can connect participating families who are in need of food, housing, other basic needs, adult basic education and literacy instruction, health, mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse and financial asset building services. In their community Statement of Interest provided to OECD prior to community selection, each Subgrantee detailed their existing and planned partnerships to meet these family needs.

Supporting Full Inclusion: Illinois is one of the national leaders in inclusive practices in early childhood. Research demonstrates that children with IEPs are more successful learning alongside their typically developing peers than in self-contained classes. Illinois puts this research into practice by working closely with the Federal Office of Special Education to implement its policies in preschool placement options. Illinois has invested its resources to educate families, communities, and public schools on best practices for educating students with IEPs in inclusive environments.

There are three models ISBE approves as best practice for inclusion in preschool. The first and most commonly implemented is the Blended Model, which is a PFA and Early Childhood Special Education classroom blended together with 70% typically developing students and the balance of students with IEPs. Depending on the school district, there may also be tuition-paying students from other families in the community in these classes as well. In the Blended Model there is one teacher who has endorsements in both Early Childhood and Special Education, plus aides as needed to meet the needs of the children. The Itinerant Model provides an itinerant special education teacher and related service staff who deliver supports in the general early childhood class; in this model, there are typically only a few students with IEPs in each classroom. The third model is the Team Teaching Model. This model has two teachers (general and special education) working together to teach all children. All three models for inclusion can take place in a community-based childcare setting, a Head Start classroom, or public school classroom setting. With each model the goal is to educate children with disabilities in a high-quality program that includes children with and without disabilities. The expectation is that all children are educated using a research-based, comprehensive curriculum. All programs

that serve students with special needs are monitored by the state as described in Section (C)(3), and state-level supports for high-quality early childhood special education are described in Section (C)(1)(c).

Currently 15.5% of children enrolled in PFA programs statewide have IEPs. The State anticipates that an equal or greater percentage of participants in the More at Four program option will have IEPs.

Other Children Who Need Additional Supports: Illinois' approach to ensuring that Subgrantees and their partners engage and effectively serve children who are homeless or in foster care, English Learners, and other populations with high needs is detailed above and in CPP-2. (Note: Illinois does not have any children residing on Indian lands.)

Ensuring Appropriate Facilities: As noted in Sections A and B, Illinois implemented the nation's largest ever state commitment to the renovation and construction of early childhood facilities. These Early Childhood Construction Grants (ECCG), awarded in 2012, were directed towards communities that were underserved with child care and early learning services, and where a lack of appropriate facilities was a primary barrier to expanding services. Several of the ECCG project sites will participate in the PFA More at Four program option.

All facilities serving young children in groups in Illinois must meet minimum health and safety standards. Child care centers are subject to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' rigorous and comprehensive licensing standards. While the State's licensing law does allow for some types of centers to be exempt from licensing, non-school-based centers participating in the More at Four program will be required to be licensed. Public school facilities are covered by the State's School Code, which establishes minimum health and safety standards. All facilities must meet relevant state and local fire and health codes. ISBE requires evidence of compliance with all of these health- and safety-related standards as part of its annual grant application process for Preschool for All grantees.

Data Systems: As described in Section B, Illinois has implemented a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Data for all children served in PFA programs, including those in these new More at Four programs, must be entered into the data system, which includes a unique identifier for each child that will identify the child throughout his or her

years as a public school student in Illinois. Training and support for Subgrantees will be provided to facilitate effective use of the data system. The system and the training have been developed to ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal privacy laws.

Using Community-Based Learning Resources: Illinois is fortunate to have a strong library system and many world-class museums, including 14 children's museums. Throughout the state, PFA programs have developed strong partnerships with libraries and museums to enrich children's learning and support parent engagement. Most More at Four programs have partnerships with their local libraries and many participate in family literacy programs. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library sends a book a month to the homes of children in several areas that will have More to Four programs, including Mount Vernon SD #80, Rock Island, and Elgin U-46. Elgin U-46 also partners with the 2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Services winner, Gail Borden Library, on a wide array of services open to More at Four families including Baby Rhyme Time, Drop in Storytime, and Family Story Time, all of which are also provided in Spanish. Elgin U46 also has Born to Learn Trails and Kindergarten Readiness Calendars in Spanish and English.

West Chicago families participate in a family literacy program at the College of DuPage. Each classroom in McLean School District #5 in Bloomington will receive two visits each year from Children's Discovery Program, which brings its Museum in Motion program to share science activities with the kids. The United Way of Rock River Valley Success by Six program promotes literacy among Rockford's youngest children through programs like Tiny Turners, Page Turners, Kindergarten Readiness Calendars, and Born to Learn Trails and materials.

Not surprisingly, the CPS has a wealth of learning and cultural opportunities available to its children and families. For example, the Grow Up Great early childhood science partnership between CPS and PNC Bank, Museum of Science and Industry, Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium, and Field Museum engages preschool teachers, students, and families at several schools. Teachers at these schools participate in a Community of Practice (professional learning community) and online professional development modules, which support both their content knowledge and their pedagogical understanding and capacity to implement high-quality science learning experiences. Participating

classrooms go on PNC-funded field trips to the participating institutions, and families are invited to multiple science family events both at museums and schools. Kohls Children’s Museum and the DuPage Children’s Museum provide similar professional development and family field trip opportunities in Chicago’s north and west suburbs.

Many PFA programs have formed strong partnerships with local arts organizations to provide arts education and enrichment to their students and families. Du Page Children’s Museum works with West Chicago District #33 preschool families to expose them to the arts, in school as well as at the museum. Jefferson County children participate in programs sponsored by the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts. One of note is the annual African-American History program that begins in the classrooms with art projects and readings and culminates in an evening program of singing, dancing, and art presentations from children from preschool through eighth grade. School Districts like Elgin U-46 who have advanced Performing Arts Academies invite preschool students to plays, concerts, and dance exhibitions during regular school hours.

Illinois is fortunate to have a large and active philanthropic community focused on early childhood. Many of the connections between libraries, museums, and arts organizations and early childhood programs are funded with grants from local foundations like the McCormick Foundation, Chicago Community Trust (and other community foundations throughout the state), the PNC Foundation, and many others.

**Section E Ambitious and Achievable Plan**

Goal: Implement strong partnerships with Subgrantees to ensure the successful implementation and expansion of High-Quality Preschool Programs.

| <b>ACTIVITY E-1: IMPLEMENT MORE AT FOUR PROGRAMS IN HIGH NEED COMMUNITIES</b>   |                 |                       |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Rationale:</i> Subgrantees will complete planning, recruitment, and start-up activities for More at Four programs and begin services no later than September 2015. |                 |                       |
| <i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up:</i> Subgrantee Communities   |                 |                       |
| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
| <b>1: Complete program plan</b> as part of formal grant application to ISBE   | Nov-Dec 2014*   | Subgrantees           |

|   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| <b>2: Begin program services</b> as indicated in MOU  | Feb or<br>Aug/Sept<br>2015 | Subgrantees  |
| <b>3: Develop formal partnerships</b> with community based organizations as needed to provide comprehensive services to participants  | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantees  |
| <b>4: Develop formal relationship with DCFS</b> Regional Office and other local foster care agencies to ensure that Eligible Children in foster care are offered enrollment in More at Four program   | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantee   |
| <b>5: Develop formal relationships with local homeless service</b> agencies and with school district's McKinley-Vento service coordinator to ensure that children who are experiencing homelessness are offered enrollment in More at Four program  | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantee   |
| <b>6: Develop recruitment, selection and enrollment plan</b> for More at Four participants in collaboration with other local early childhood service providers, including child care providers, PFA programs, Head Start, and home visiting programs; recruit participants for initial year | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantees and community partners, with support from OECD |
| <b>7: Develop monthly monitoring plan</b> for subcontracted More at Four slots, as applicable   | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantees that are subcontracting                        |
| <b>8: Purchase furniture and make minor facility modifications</b> to ensure appropriate environments for young children  | Jan-Jun<br>2015            | Subgrantees  |
| <b>9: Apply for Collaboration status</b> , if combining PDG funds with CCAP, to ensure participants receive maximum benefits and greater continuity of eligibility from CCAP  | Jan-Mar<br>2015            | Subgrantees braiding PDG program with CCAP funds           |

|   |                  |             |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| <b>10. Establish Parent Council</b> if one does not already exist for the Preschool for All program; develop plan to ensure More at Four participating families are part of the council | Jan-Jun<br>2015  | Subgrantees |
| <b>11. Participate in Professional Development needs assessment</b> completed by ISBE, and develop plan for initial year's professional development for instructional and support staff | Jan-Jun<br>2015  | Subgrantees |
| <b>12. Enter all participating children in ISBE Student Information System</b> including all required information about student and family characteristics                              | Oct each<br>year | Subgrantees |
| <b>13. Develop formal partnerships with libraries, museums, and arts organizations</b> to enrich the experiences of More at Four program participants                                   | Jan-Jun<br>2015  | Subgrantees |
| *Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether it's application for this grant is successful   |                  |             |

**F. Alignment within a Birth through Third Grade Continuum**

*(1) Alignment Birth to Age Five*

*(a) Coordinating with Other Birth through Age Five Programs*

The State's planned approach to supporting the coordination of programs and providers across all types of services for young children and their families ages birth through five, and for ensuring the participation in More at Four programs by children in isolated or hard-to-reach families, is described in detail under Competitive Preference Priority 2. The State will be implementing a regional system of supports for local community collaborations, and these collaborations will be charged with ensuring that early childhood services from birth to kindergarten (and into early elementary school) are well coordinated, that children with high needs are identified and enrolled in services, and that the community has an up-do-date strategic plan for expanding and implementing

high quality, comprehensive early childhood services, especially for those children with highest needs.

Of course, coordinating early childhood services is of little value if the basic services are not actually available in the community. As noted previously, Illinois already has a relatively high level of services available for infants, toddlers, and three-year-olds compared to most states, and through the Birth to Five Initiative, the State will be growing services for children at all these ages while it grows preschool for four-year-olds. In addition, 16 of the 18 of the selected communities already have an Early Head Start program and/or had at least one application for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships submitted this summer, and 17 of them have at least one existing home visiting program.

Each of the communities selected provides full-day kindergarten for at least some of its students (most offer full-day for all students), and each Subgrantee has agreed to ensure that all children who participate in the More at Four program will be offered full-day kindergarten. School districts will be supported in developing continued parent engagement supports for the kindergarten through grade three years through the supports for family engagement described in Section (E)(10)(i- j) above. Before and after school care, either on-site or in nearby centers with transportation, is commonly available in the selected communities. As previously noted, Illinois does not have a waiting list for Child Care Assistance, and the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies throughout the state provide strong support for quality school-age care.

*(b) Ensuring No Diminution of Services or Increased Cost*

As noted in Section A, Illinois' Birth to Five Initiative includes significantly increased investment across many types of programs serving children from birth to age five. This includes home visiting and high-quality child care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Therefore, it is anticipated that implementation of the State's plan will increase rather than decrease the availability and affordability of services for children ages birth to five.

In each of the selected communities, some PFA slots are integrated into community-based, full-day, full-year child care programs. Incorporating PFA into these child care programs ensures that children receive high-quality, continuous care while their parents

work or attend school or training. It also helps ensure that enrollment of four-year-old children in these centers is not adversely affected by the implementation of the State's plan to extend PFA services to more children.

*(2) Alignment with Kindergarten through Third Grade*

Children's success in early elementary school, including in reading, math, and other areas of learning, is dependent upon sustaining the gains that will be made in PFA More at Four programs. Districts that are able to connect, align, and integrate their efforts across infant-toddler programs, preschool, kindergarten, and the early elementary grades will provide an education continuum that is more effective in preventing and addressing achievement gaps, and in the process they will feel less like they are trying to orchestrate a series of unrelated education reform efforts. Illinois has done significant work to develop and implement birth-to-third grade approaches to sustain early learning outcomes into the early elementary grades.

Illinois was one of six states selected to participate in the National Governors Association's recently completed birth to third grade policy academy. Over the past 18 months, the State engaged in cross-sector and cross-state conversations focused on better alignment of systems from birth to third grade. In April 2014, Illinois convened a Governor's Symposium entitled, "College and Career Readiness Begins at Birth: Connecting the Dots for Student Success," which brought together over one hundred district and community leaders to discuss issues related to a birth-to-third grade education continuum. Symposium sessions, focused on aligned standards, assessments, and teacher evaluation systems, were very well received. Attendees indicated strong interest in further opportunities to work on birth-to-third grade alignment, and the State's ambitious and achievable plan capitalizes on this momentum.

In addition to the symposium, Illinois will be building on many significant accomplishments related to birth-to-third grade alignment. These include:

- Child Learning Standards and Expectations: Illinois has aligned its standards from birth to twelfth grade (see Section (B)(1)) in the areas of language, math, science, social studies, the arts, social-emotional development, and physical development and health.

- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment: Illinois has developed and is in the process of implementing a multi-domain, observational kindergarten readiness assessment, KIDS, (see Sections (B)(2-3)), aligned to Illinois Standards that will provide assessment data to teachers for enhanced, tailored instruction and to schools for program improvement. KIDS is also aligned with commonly used early learning assessments such as the Creative Curriculum GOLD assessment used by many districts and community-based centers.
- Illinois' P-12 Principal Endorsement: Illinois is the first state in the nation to require the inclusion of content and field experiences in early childhood in principal preparation program standards.
- Culturally Inclusive Environments: Illinois enacted new Early Childhood Bilingual rules that extend specialized services to English Learners in state-funded preschool programs, ensuring greater continuity in services for these children from preschool through the early elementary grades. In addition, the state has adopted the WIDA English Language Development Standards, which are aligned from preschool through high school.
- Highly Effective Teachers: Illinois' Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) requires school districts to implement an evaluation system for teachers—including school-based preschool teachers—that includes measures of both teachers' professional practice and student growth. This consistent system of evaluation will increase the alignment of systems and expectations of teachers from preschool to third grade. The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), the State's advisory group for developing rules and recommendations regarding the enactment of this PERA, drafted guidance and recommendations to districts about how to appropriately implement the evaluation of teachers in preschool through third grade. This guidance reflects substantial input from early childhood educators about what constitutes high-quality instruction in early childhood and what teacher and student behaviors evaluators should be looking for that may be different in the early versus later grades.
- Engaged Families: Recognizing the tremendous value of engaged families, ISBE drafted its Family Engagement Framework, as described in Section (C)(1) and

Appendix on page 132. The Framework is designed to use in developing and expanding school-family partnerships to support improved student learning and healthy development outcomes across the preschool-to-high school continuum.

- Full-Day Kindergarten: In 2013-14, approximately 79% of kindergarteners in Illinois attended full day, and 90% of elementary schools with kindergarten offered a full-day program. This represents a dramatic increase since 2006-07, when only 57% of Illinois kindergarteners attended full-day programs. The State expects that this trend toward full-day kindergarten will continue over the four years of this grant.

### *Preschool to Third Grade Aligned Education Continuum*

Illinois believes that a high-quality, intentionally aligned education system from preschool to third grade is essential for the success of the State's highest-need children and is committed to ensure a high-quality, comprehensive system of teaching, learning, and support for children from preschool to third grade. As a part of the Memorandum of Understanding, participating districts have committed to the following strategies specifically to ensure preschool-to-third grade alignment:

- Curriculum alignment between the More at Four program and the kindergarten program into which children will transition, including joint professional development opportunities for teachers
- Full-day kindergarten placement for children who participate in the program funded by this grant
- High level of parent engagement activities sustained in the early elementary years
- Assessment of children in the program funded by this grant using the KIDS

The State will support districts to successfully implement these strategies and provide additional opportunities to promote an aligned preschool-to-third grade educational and comprehensive services continuum. Specifically, Illinois proposes to work with districts to ensure children in the More at Four program are well-prepared for kindergarten, successfully transition to full-day kindergarten, and are able to sustain gains made in preschool through the third grade year. To ensure this happens, the State will engage districts in planning and implementation efforts that promote – amongst other things – collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers; well-prepared administrators

and teachers; the alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment; the use of robust data systems to measure child outcomes; a high level of parent and family engagement in children's education across preschool to third grade; and a community systems approach to providing comprehensive services to children and families. To support districts in this work, Illinois will contract with a state university to hire a P-3 Director and to provide supports such as institutes, regional meetings, webinars, and individual district meetings to facilitate the planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment initiatives.

Approximately one-fourth of the children who will attend More at Four programs will transition into "Community Schools," where the school has joined forces with non-profit organizations and local businesses to provide a broad range of programs and services to students and their families in support of comprehensive child development. Community Schools are a growing movement in Illinois, and the Federation for Community Schools provides ongoing support to schools and districts that are interested in adopting a community school approach to providing comprehensive services to children and their families. The P-3 Director will work with the Federation to involve more Selected Communities in developing comprehensive services for children in kindergarten and the early elementary years.

#### *Preschool-to-Third Grade Continuity Project*

ISBE will enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with a state university to manage a Preschool-to-Third Grade Continuity Project. A new P-3 Director (job description in Appendix page 46) will jointly report to a supervisor at the state university, the Executive Director of OECD, and the ISBE Assistant Superintendent for Language and Early Childhood Development. He or she will be responsible for creating useful and practical tools and opportunities to support participating districts and facilitate their planning and implementation of a preschool-to-third grade education continuum. Some of the specific work will include implementing P-3 Institutes (see below), conducting regional meetings and planning sessions across the state, hosting webinars on topics relevant to multiple districts, and meeting individually with districts to assist in their planning and implementation of strategies to ensure preschool-to-third grade alignment.

The P-3 Director will support districts to align preschool to third grade in the following areas:

- Cross-sector system building to ensure clear and facilitated pathways for children from preschool to full-day kindergarten to early elementary settings. Specific components of this may include developing a formal governance structure, strategic planning for a shared vision, and funding to support preschool-to-third grade alignment efforts and continuity in comprehensive services
- Committed administrators who communicate that preschool-to-third grade alignment is a priority by providing time and resources to foster communication and collaboration across grade level
- Highly-effective teaching staff whose preparation, professional development, and evaluation is aligned from preschool to third grade and is grounded in child development and effective instructional practices for supporting young children's growth and differentiating instruction across a spectrum of developmental areas. Effective teachers in this system thrive on within- and cross-grade/setting collaborative work and observation
- Standards, curriculum, and assessment represent a coherent system of instruction, with shared expectations for student growth and a focus on both academic and social-emotional skills. These instructional components are intentionally aligned, meaningful, follow a developmental progression, and provide opportunities to monitor and promote individual student growth
- Culturally- and linguistically-inclusive and supportive learning environments contain resources to support a wide range of development, foster positive interactions with peers and adults, and are reflective of children's families and cultures
- Data-driven measurement, feedback loops, and improvement practices use meaningful child-based assessments, in two languages when children attend bilingual programs, and program data drive instruction, identify achievement gaps, allocate resources, and determine areas for professional development. Shared data – and common goals supported by the data – across grades/programs is essential to ensuring a strong educational trajectory

- Schools and engaged families partner in children’s formal education by establishing two-way communication regarding home environment and ways to support home learning; school-parent communication about school programs and students’ progress; volunteering in school; involving parents in home-based learning based on their funds of knowledge; involving parents in school decision-making, using culturally sensitive approaches; and involving parents in school-community collaborations, and other ways identified by the families.

### *District Support*

To support districts and communities participating in the PFA More at Four programs, the state university will implement P-3 Institutes (see below) and planning and follow-up activities throughout the four-year period. The P-3 Institutes, regional meetings, and other supports will enable participating districts and communities to delve deeper to build sustainable structures that will stay in place long after grant funding ends. At the foundation of this work will be the support and assistance from critical state agency and organization representatives that will provide critical technical assistance and support to districts with aligned implementation of new state initiatives. To prepare for the initial institute, the P-3 Director (and/or related university staff) will first conduct a site visit with each of the participating districts to document the need for alignment and to determine the right partners to bring to the Institute. Information gathered will be used to determine the specific topics for the institutes. Each of two cohorts of districts will participate in an intensive and follow-up institute, regional meetings, and/or individual planning sessions. Priority topics will be based upon the needs of participating districts, with transition to kindergarten a key focus for all.

### *Intensive Preschool to Third Grade Institutes*

The P-3 Director and staff will host an intensive, three-day summer institute for two cohorts of approximately 15 district teams, the first in the summer of year one, and the second in the summer of year three. Districts will be encouraged to bring a team of six to eight stakeholders – such as curriculum directors, early childhood directors, principals, bilingual education coordinators, preschool and K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers/teacher leaders,

school board members, union representatives, other administrative staff, and community stakeholders. During the institutes, each team will have the opportunity to learn from experts, have facilitated conversations for planning, and share their plans and work with other districts. One requirement of the institute will be the development of a sustainability plan, aligned with practical and attainable goals and action plans that will be revisited with the district/communities throughout their four-year participation with the project. The state university team contractor will use tools, asset mapping, theory of change, and logic modeling to help district/communities with deeper implementation of the work.

### *Follow-Up Institutes and Meetings*

During year two and year four of the grant, OECD will host a two-day follow up institute for those district teams that participated in the intensive institutes the previous year. In between institutes, districts/communities will participate in at least one site visit and/or regional meeting that is not for evaluative purposes, but rather to document the work that is occurring, both successes and challenges. The site visits will ensure that the Institutes are focused on the real and current issues in which the districts/communities are experiencing with the work. During these follow-up institutes, district teams will have opportunities to engage in further learning opportunities, reflect upon their work to date, engage in planning, and hear from other districts about their successes and challenges.

## **Section F Ambitious and Achievable Plan**

Goals:

1. Ensure that Subgrantees are effectively aligning PFA More at Four programs with other early childhood services for children from birth to age four. (Note: Activities, implementation steps and milestones towards this goal are noted in Section E and in Section CPP-2 and are therefore not repeated here.)
2. Ensure that Subgrantees are effectively aligning PFA More at Four programs with kindergarten through third grade in the local school district(s).

**ACTIVITY F-1: IMPLEMENT SUPPORTS FOR PRESCHOOL THROUGH THIRD GRADE ALIGNMENT**

*Rationale:* Participating districts serving the most at-risk children will benefit from State support in planning and implementing strategies to provide children with seamless transitions to kindergarten and opportunities to participate in full-day early elementary programs that provide an aligned, instructionally strong, and supportive environment.

*Locations & Scale-Up:* Districts implementing and/or partnering with PFA More at Four Programs.

| IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES  | TIMELINE               | RESPONSIBILITY                           |
|--|------------------------|--|
| <b>1: Post position</b> for the P-3 Director and requirements for contract for preschool-to-third Grade work.  | Jan 2015               | OECD, ISBE                               |
| <b>2: Contract with a state university</b> to hire P-3, host summer institutes, and assist with district planning and implementation   | Mar 2015               | OECD and ISBE<br>Procurement Office      |
| <b>4: Organize the first P-3 Institute</b> , including recruiting districts to participate   | Mar – Jun<br>2015      | State Univ.<br>Contractor                |
| <b>5: Complete Outreach/Initial Site Visit to Participating Districts</b> about preschool-to-third grade alignment   | Mar – Jun<br>2015      | State Univ.<br>Contractor, OECD,<br>ISBE |
| <b>6: Conduct first Intensive P-3 Institute</b>  | Jul 2015               | OECD                                     |
| <b>7: Conduct regional meetings</b> throughout the State   | Sep 2015 –<br>Jun 2016 | State Univ.<br>Contractor, OECD,<br>ISBE |
| <b>9: Conduct individual site-visits</b> and meetings with select districts to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment and to determine district needs | Oct2015 –<br>May 2016  | P-3 Director                             |
| <b>10: Plan for Follow-up Institutes</b>   | Dec 2015 –<br>May 2016 | State Univ.<br>Contractor, OECD,<br>ISBE |
| <b>11: Implement Follow-up P-3 Institute</b>   | Jul 2016               | State Univ.<br>Contractor                |

|   |                                 |  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>12: Conduct individual site-visits</b> and meetings with select districts to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment and to determine district needs | Sep 2016 –<br>May 2017          | P-3 Director                             |
| <b>13: Conduct regional meetings and/or webinars</b> throughout the State to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment based on district need             | Sep 2016 –<br>June 2017         | State Univ.<br>Contractor, OECD,<br>ISBE |
| <b>14: Complete Outreach/Initial Site Visit to Second Cohort of Participating Districts</b> about preschool-to-third grade alignment  | January<br>2017 –<br>March 2017 | State Univ.<br>Contractor, OECD,<br>ISBE |
| <b>15 : Conduct second Intensive P-3 Institute (Cohort 2)</b>   | Jul 2017                        | State Univ.<br>Contractor                |
| <b>16: Conduct regional meetings and/or webinars</b> throughout the State to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment based on district need             | Sep 2017 –<br>May 2018          | State Univ.<br>Contractor                |
| <b>17: Conduct individual site-visits</b> and meetings with select districts to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment and to determine district needs | Sep 2017 –<br>May 2018          | P-3 Director                             |
| <b>18: Implement Follow-up Preschool to Third Grade Institute (Cohort 2)</b>  | Jul 2018                        | State Univ.<br>Contractor                |
| <b>19: Conduct webinars and in individual site-visits</b> and meetings with select districts to support planning and implementation of preschool-to-third grade alignment                 | Sep 2018 –<br>Dec 2018          | P-3 Director                             |

**Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds**

As described in Section A, Illinois will implement its plan to start up and ambitiously expand the PFA More at Four program option as part of the State’s Birth to Five Initiative. This initiative includes the State’s commitment of more than \$125 million investment in these new and enhanced High-Quality Preschool slots over the four years of the grant as detailed in Table A, Part II in the federal Excel workbook. The Illinois

State Board of Education has reviewed and approved this commitment (see report from Board’s September 2014 meeting in Appendix on page 29), as has the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget. As noted in their letters of support attached to this application, the major child advocacy organizations in Illinois including Illinois Action for Children, Latino Policy Forum, and Voices for Illinois Children are committed to working with the legislature to ensure the needed funding is allocated as planned each year.

In addition to the state investment, Illinois has secured commitments from high-need communities that will be implementing slots in the first year of the grant totaling over \$6 million across the four years of the grant. These commitments are outlined in the preliminary MOUs signed by each community, and include in-kind services (e.g., space, utilities, cleaning, etc.) that each Subgrantee and/or its community partners will contribute to the program (see MOU Attachment). These local in-kind investments are not included in Table A because ISBE does not currently have a system in place to monitor in-kind expenditures and it would be difficult for the State to accurately report on these expenditures each year.

## **Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting a Continuum of Early Learning and Development**

Illinois’s goal is to ensure that children with the highest needs in each selected community receive a **coordinated progression of high-quality early learning and comprehensive services from birth through third grade**. The State will accomplish this by leveraging key innovations in local community systems development and statewide systems coordination to develop seamless “pipelines” of services across the early childhood years.

As noted in Section A, over the past decade, Illinois has developed an exceptionally broad and deep consensus for its vision of a system of universal supports that should be offered to every child and family, as well as the targeted interventions that every child with high needs must receive to support early learning and development and school readiness. A well-coordinated, easy-to-navigate “system of systems” through which

every family with young children has access to the full range of supports they need to raise healthy, thriving children from the child’s birth to kindergarten entry, will serve as the State’s pipeline to engage and connect more children with high needs to a continuum of high-quality preschool and other early learning services. The State will implement a community system development approach to prepare and support a cohort of community leaders who will take engagement of families with very high needs to the next level.

Illinois has been making steady progress towards its goal of fostering effective community systems and is ready to take a significant step forward through this State Plan. Through various arms of the ELC, OECD, and IAT, the State vision for community systems has been formed, validated, and begun to be operationalized in several ways. One example is the ELC’s 2013 adoption of Recommendations to the Early Learning Council Regarding Highest Needs Families from its *All Families Served* Subcommittee (see page 175 in the Appendix). Catalyzed by Illinois’ RTT-ELC strategic initiatives, the IAT and the ELC have placed significant focus on system-building work at the state level to operationalize these ideas. At the same time, Illinois formed the Consortium for Community Systems Development to develop a strategic plan for a coherent and robust approach to supporting effective local systems in alignment with the state’s vision and goals.

Illinois has tremendous experience upon which to draw for this next phase of local-level system building. Over 40 communities in Illinois have established cross-sector early childhood collaborations, including 17 of the 18 communities proposed as Subgrantees for More at Four. Currently in Illinois, AOK, Innovation Zones, MIECHV community collaborations, and some locally funded collaboratives take a comprehensive systems approach (early learning, health, and family support) to serving the needs of young children. These collaborations are essential to forming local “pipelines” to identify children with high needs at or before birth and bridge gaps between systems and from program to program to ensure continuous access to high-quality comprehensive services through preschool and into elementary school. Through MIECHV, Illinois is building a practice base for coupling community systems development with coordinated intake to identify and engage families with complex needs before or shortly after birth—the starting point for a well-functioning community pipeline. In addition, a number of collaborations

in the state (including those funded with private or local public dollars) have built local capacity to coordinate planning around developmental screening and transitions from Part C to Part B from the perspective of families who use the system.

Through the State's work in seven RTT-ELC Innovation Zones, Illinois is currently building and measuring the impact of innovative pipeline strategies for recruiting and enrolling families in programs serving children from birth to five. New and existing cross-sector collaborations have completed a structured planning process, including broadening partnerships to include systems other than early childhood that encounter highest need children and families. These collaborations have recently begun implementing locally-developed strategies specifically focused on ensuring children with very high needs are connected with, participate in, and are successfully retained in high-quality early learning programs, including evidence-based home visiting, high-quality child care, Head Start and/or PFA. For example, in several Innovation Zones, local "pipeline connectors" (parent ambassadors or system navigators) are working in Innovation Zone communities to bridge the uncertainty parents face when trying to connect to an early childhood program or transition from one program to another. Innovation Zones are also experimenting with delivering early childhood education and/or parent engagement activities in non-traditional settings and through innovative models as a way to connect families early in their child's experience. For example, in one community where families have been historically reluctant to enroll their children in preschool, the collaboration is implementing "pop-up preschools," weekly parent-child play sessions for two and three-year-olds in neighborhood-based settings where parents can experience first-hand what happens in a preschool program. Each of these innovations is being closely monitored and evaluated to determine its effectiveness in increasing enrollment and attendance in preschool programs by children with high needs.

### *Proposed strategy*

Over the past 14 months, a wide range of stakeholders worked together to develop an Illinois Community Systems Development Plan (an Executive Summary and list of participants begin on page 177 in Appendix), which puts forward a blueprint for the creation of state level and regional infrastructure that would encourage and strengthen

community-level collaboration to assure better access to high-quality services and transitions for children and families. Because a pipeline is dependent on integration between the state and local level, a redevelopment of the state level systems is needed to establish a shared goal of aligned pathways to ensure a coordinated progression of high-quality early learning and comprehensive services from birth through third grade. As part of the State's long term vision, state and local resources will be leveraged in coordination to achieve the goal of serving more high-need children.

To achieve the State's ambitious goals at the community level, Illinois has a four-year plan to build professional capacity and develop statewide infrastructure that will incentivize and support the creation of local pipelines. At the state level, OECD will lead efforts across state agencies and through the state's IAT (IDHS, ISBE, DCFS, IDPH) to align policies and practices and blend and braid resources. OECD will also establish a set of state-level goals and measurable outcomes that all communities are working towards and that all publicly funded community collaboratives would be held accountable to making progress towards achieving. Additionally, OECD will work collaboratively with state agencies to expand and enhance an online, centralized location for data related to serving more children with high needs.

In 2016, OECD will launch a Public-Private Partnership for Community Systems Development, which will serve as the coordinating body for regional hubs, act as liaison from local to state policy makers, and develop public and private funding sources to launch and sustain state and regional infrastructure to sustain the pipeline within Illinois. Over the course of three years, an estimated twelve regional hubs will be established statewide, with priority to areas of the state with clusters of More at Four Subgrantees. The purpose of these regional hubs will be to provide cross-system leadership to coordinate, align, and support existing local collaborations in developing pipelines of continuous, high-quality early learning services, as well as initiating or nurturing new collaborations in communities where there are none.

Regional hubs will serve as the primary liaison between community collaboratives and the state to assure community voices are informing the state-level systems building efforts and as a feedback loop between the state and local level in policy optimization. Regional hubs will coordinate technical assistance, training, and coaching for local

collaboratives to build their capacity to plan for and implement cross-sector strategies aligned with state goals. They will also support local coordinators in building cross-sector relationships with school districts and with non-early childhood systems to ensure families are connected to comprehensive supports.

Through this unified approach to state and local system building, local collaboratives will be better supported to coordinate and convene cross-sector partners in the community to ensure children birth to age five are enrolled in a continuum of care that includes high-quality preschool. While the collaboration itself may look different in each community—given its history, resources, and unique local characteristics—they will be aligned by a common goal and supported in development through the regional hub. In communities with multiple local systems initiatives and dedicated community systems development staff (such as MIECHV, Innovation Zones, and AOK Networks), more targeted and intensive efforts will be locally developed, and these efforts will be scaled up statewide when possible. For example, in communities with both MIECHV and More at Four Subgrantees, Illinois will pilot expansion of coordinated intake to include preschool in addition to home visiting, thus adding a critical link for smooth transitions for priority populations. Other communities, including several Innovation Zones, will launch or continue pilots of system navigation strategies that link together community or parent engagement staff from various sectors towards shared goals for a community's highest need children. Subgrantees will be required to identify and serve those children with the highest needs in their communities, as described in Section (A)(3). Subgrantees have included specific funding for community systems coordination in their More at Four budgets, and 17 of the 18 of the Selected Communities have an existing early childhood collaboration in their community. Six of the seven current Innovation Zones (including two community areas in Chicago) are Selected Communities, as are five of the six MIECHV communities (including one community area in Chicago). Seven of the 12 counties or communities with AOK Networks are Selected Communities (including one community area in Chicago).

Building professional capacity at all levels of the system to support the establishment and growth of local collaborations is critically important. Systemic change requires new ways of learning, thinking, and acting. The Consortium for Community Systems

Development is currently charged with providing training and TA to local collaborations. Over the four-year implementation, that responsibility will expand and transition to the Public-Private Partnership, and then to Regional Hubs.

Increased cross-sector awareness is also critical to pipeline success. In-service professional development sessions designed to reiterate the importance of consistent referral to early learning programs will be held for intake and case workers engaged with children birth to three, including case managers supporting SNAP, WIC, TANF and child welfare cases. In addition, a communications campaign will establish one-message/one-voice at the regional level to increase awareness of the value of ECE among families, referral partners, and other community providers. Informational materials will be distributed to front line teams across sectors to reduce confusion about application deadlines and eligibility requirements. More at Four early learning programs will also be entered in the Department of Child and Family Services provider database to ease referrals to preschool for children involved in the child welfare system.

Illinois has the experience it takes to bring this ambitious plan to life. The State is committed to constructing local pipelines to engage children with very high needs by supporting local collaborations.

**CPP 2 Ambitious and Achievable Plan**

Goal: Ensure that children with the highest needs in each selected community receive a coordinated progression of high-quality early learning and comprehensive services from birth through third grade.

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| <p><b>ACTIVITY CPP2-1: DEVELOP STATE-LEVEL AND REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN LOCAL SYSTEMS</b></p>  |
| <p><i>Rationale: Implementation of Illinois’ Community Systems Development Strategic Plan will create a coherent and intentional approach to encouraging and supporting effective local collaboration towards a unified set of goals and outcomes.</i></p> |
| <p><i>Locations &amp; Scale-Up: Statewide, on a regional basis phased in over three years</i></p>  |

| IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES  | TIMELINE  | RESPONSIBILITY                                      |
|--|-----------|---|
| <b>1: Finalize Illinois Community Systems Development Strategic Plan</b>   | Oct 2014* | Consortium for Community Systems Development (CCSD) |
| <b>2: Adopt Community Systems Development Strategic Plan</b>   | Feb 2015  | ELC Executive Committee                             |
| <b>3: Hire Director for Community Systems Development</b>  | Mar 2015  | OECD  |
| <b>4: Establish community systems development workplan</b> and specific, time-bound deliverables for IAT   | Mar 2015  | OECD  |
| <b>5: Finalize, adopt, and plan for data alignment</b> around outcome metrics for state and local system goals   | Jul 2015  | OECD and ELC  |
| <b>6: Create 5-year resource development plan</b> that includes public and private funding sources to launch and sustain state and regional infrastructure | Oct 2015  | OECD  |
| <b>8: Determine geographic boundaries for regional structure</b> and process for creating regional hubs and housing regional staff                         | Oct 2015  | OECD  |
| <b>9: Develop and execute contract to establish state level Public-Private Partnership</b> for Community Systems Development (PPP for CSD)                 | Feb 2016  | OECD  |
| <b>10: Establish four regional hubs</b> and hire staff   | Feb 2016  | OECD  |
| <b>11: Establish four regional hubs</b> and hire staff   | Feb 2017  | PPP for CSD   |
| <b>12: Establish four regional hubs</b> and hire staff   | Feb 2018  | PPP for CSD   |
| *Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether its application for this grant is successful                             |           |   |

**ACTIVITY CPP2-2: DEVELOP LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN TARGETED AREAS TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY PIPELINES THAT IDENTIFY AND CONTINUOUSLY SERVE CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS**

*Rationale: Through federal and state funded initiatives, Illinois is investing resources in community systems development in specific communities that can be leveraged by More at Four.*

*Locations & Scale-Up: Communities with More at Four Subgrantees with one additional local system initiative or existing collaboration*

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b> | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1: Develop plan to launch second cohort of Innovation Zones</b> with priority to subgrantees   | Oct 2014*       | OECD                  |
| <b>2: Ensure consistent language among “family support specialists”</b> of Subgrantees to include community systems development functions | Dec 2014*       | OECD                  |
| <b>3: Conduct preliminary Innovation Zone evaluation</b> with recommendations   | Dec 2014*       | OECD                  |
| <b>4: Identify and map collaborative infrastructure</b> in Subgrantee communities   | May 2015        | OECD                  |
| <b>5: Develop pilot to expand and enhance home visiting coordinated intake</b> to include preschool                                       | Jul 2015        | OECD                  |
| <b>6: Launch second cohort of Innovation Zones</b>  | Jul 2015        | OECD                  |
| <b>7: Identify and make recommendations regarding pipeline creation data needs</b> to Inter-Agency Team                                   | Dec 2015        | OECD                  |
| <b>8: Develop plan to remediate data barriers</b>   | Jun 2016        | OECD/IAT              |

\*Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether its application for this grant is successful

**ACTIVITY CPP2-3: INCREASE STATEWIDE PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SYSTEMS TO IDENTIFY, ENGAGE, AND CONTINUOUSLY SERVE CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS IN HIGH-QUALITY BIRTH TO EIGHT PROGRAMS**

*Rationale: Transitioning to a community systems approach requires “change management” through coherent professional development at the state, regional, and local levels to ensure that changes are smoothly implemented and lasting benefits are achieved.*

*Locations & Scale-Up: Statewide, starting with ongoing initiatives through RTT-ELC*

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/MILESTONES</b>  | <b>TIMELINE</b>                  | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>                               |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>1: Initiate pilot of the Able Change Framework</b><br>systems training as potential unified approach to supporting effective local collaboration   | Dec 2014*                        | Consortium for Community Systems Development (CCSD) |
| <b>2: Develop plan and adopt a unified approach for comprehensive Training and Technical Assistance system</b> that includes local collaborations, state program administrators, and intermediary systems | Jul 2015                         | CCSD & OECD   |
| <b>3: Establish an Interagency Technical Assistance Unit</b> that can support local systems building and effective collaboration.   | Dec 2015                         | OECD  |
| <b>4: Establish a State Level Public Private Partnership (PPP) for CSD</b> to assume responsibility for developing professional capacity within Interagency TA Unit                                       | Feb 2016                         | OECD  |
| <b>5: Transition to State Level PPP for CSD</b><br>responsibility for provision of training and TA for local collaboratives   | Jan 2017                         | PPP-CSD   |
| <b>6: Transition primary responsibility for training and TA</b> to local collaborations to regional hubs as they are established  | Feb 2016<br>Feb 2017<br>Feb 2018 | Regional Hubs                                       |

\*Indicates activities that will be completed before the State is notified whether its application for this grant is successful

### **Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High-Quality Preschool Program Slots**

As detailed in Table A, Illinois will use approximately \$65 million of the four year \$80 million award to create new State Preschool Program slots.

#### **G. Budget and Sustainability**

##### *(1) State Preschool Program Slots/Subgrantee Budgets*

Illinois completed an extensive process to develop the budgets for the Subgrantees. Each Subgrantee submitted a budget request for its anticipated expenses for a full school year, including any local in-kind contributions or (in the case of enhanced PFA slots and new slots that will also receive Head Start or CCAP funding) other existing sources of funding. Similarly, the Subgrantees each submitted a budget request for January-June, 2015, which included operating costs for those classrooms that were planned to begin serving children during the current school year and program start-up costs such as new classroom furniture, minor remodeling, staff that would begin working before July 2015 to complete program planning and participant recruitment, and a small per-classroom Start Up TA grant that programs may use for start-up professional development or consultation needs.

Each budget was reviewed in detail by the ISBE Early Childhood Division and OECD to ensure appropriateness and reasonableness of costs as well as to ensure that PDG funds were supplementing and not supplanting any existing funding for preschool. This grant-by-grant budget review, rather than a standardized per child allocation, is the method used by ISBE for the current PFA program, as it allows the State to account for the wide variation in program costs (especially teacher salaries and benefits and transportation costs) that exists across the state.

The State's budget reflects actual anticipated costs by calendar year. That is, the amount budgeted for each subgrantee for each calendar year is the amount anticipated to be spent January through December of that year, rather than the amount that will be obligated in that year, but spent through June of the following year. Thus, the amount in Calendar Year 2015 Subgrants for most programs reflects only half a school year of funding, plus start-up costs.

The detailed Subgrantee budget narratives for Subgrantees in the Budget Narrative document provide information on the Calendar Year 2015 budget and the planned Calendar Year 2016, 2017, and 2018 budgets to be spent from federal PDG funds, as well as the planned total budget (including local in-kind and other funding) for these initial expanded slots. The 2016, 2017, and 2018 amounts reflect the cost of a full school year (half of one school year plus half of the following school year).

The reviewer will be able to note both the necessary variation in per child federal PDG cost as well as total cost. A summary table of Subgrantee's costs for SFY 2016 (ongoing annual program costs), for SFY 2015 (Jan-June 2015), and for all of Calendar Year 2015 is provided in the Appendix beginning at page 183.

The State does not provide a budget breakout or narrative for the state matching funds to be provided to Subgrantees as these funds by law are subject to a statewide competition and their allocation by Subgrantee cannot be determined in advance.

The Per Pupil Estimates in Table A do not reflect well the anticipated annual cost of slots in the More at Four program, as they are based on calendar rather than school year costs. As such, each year has a blend of slots that are being funded for a full year and slots that will start up during that year and are therefore only being funded for part of the year. In addition, the estimates are made even more difficult to compare to actual anticipated annual per slots costs because of a specific requirement by Illinois law that applies only to those slots that are funded by federal funds. In all school districts except Chicago (which has a separate pension system), for any certified staff (e.g., teacher, instructional coordinator) that is paid by federal funds, the district must pay a special 33% contribution into the state's Teacher Retirement System (the actual percentage varies each year). This requirement adds up to \$1,000 per slot cost only to those slots paid by federal funds and delivered by school districts outside of Chicago.

Through a detailed review of the Subgrantee budgets, the State has developed the following estimates of average annual per child costs (not including the special retirement assessment) to be paid by PDG funds or state matching funds for the various types of slots that will be funded:

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| New slots without other funding (except local in-kind)   | \$8,200 |
| New slots that are extending a Head Start slot to full day   | \$4,400 |
| New slots that are adding Licensed teacher & comp. services to full-workday, full-year child care subsidized by CCAP | \$4,400 |
| Enhanced PFA slot—extending to full day and adding comprehensive services  | \$5,100 |

As noted in the budget narratives and summary Subgrantee budget tables, most programs do add local in-kind and/or other contributions to the PDG funds. The full cost of a High-Quality More at Four Preschool slot averages \$10,025.

*(2) Coordinating the Use of Existing Funds:*

As detailed throughout the proposal, Illinois currently supports the blending and braiding of PFA funding with Child Care Assistance, Head Start, IDEA Part B, Title I, Bilingual Education, and local education funding. This will continue with the new More at Four slots, as detailed in the Subgrantee Budget Narratives.

*(3) Sustaining Funding Past End of Grant*

As described in Section (A)(1), the Birth to Five Initiative budget blueprint includes funding to continue the federally-funded More at Four slots through SFY2020.