

Illinois State Board of Education
PDG B-5 Planning Grant Program Progress Report
Quarter Ended December 30, 2023

Activity One: Conduct or Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

Home Visitor Workforce Needs Assessment Project: The Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referrals (INCCRRA) is leading the Home Visitor Needs Assessment Project. During Q4, INCCRRA completed the final set of focus groups which were held in-person. The following counties participated in the focus groups: DuPage/Kane County, Winnebago County, Lee/Carroll/Whiteside County, Peoria/Bloomington/Champaign County, East Central Illinois, Madison/St. Clair County, Southern Illinois, and Adams County. INCCRRA also launched and completed several virtual-only focus groups. These focus groups were targeted to ensure additional representation from home visitors in specific areas which included 1.) Spanish-speaking home visitors and supervisors, 2) home visitor supervisors 3.) home visitors in rural areas and 4) BIPOC home visitors. INCCRRA completed transcription and theming of all focus group sessions and completed qualitative analysis to produce a draft report. This draft was shared with the consultant for review and her feedback was incorporated into the final draft that will be shared with the advisory committee in January 2024.

Integrate Gateways Registry Data into Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) Project: INCCRRA was selected as the vendor to facilitate the Integrate Gateways Registry Data into Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) Project. During Q4, INCCRRA met with the University of Illinois-Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) Team for an overview of the Cloud Pak system and learned how to upload files. INCCRRA successfully uploaded the FY19, FY20, and FY21 Gateways Registry workforce data files to Cloud Pak.

Educator Workforce Dataset Project: In Q4, Northern Illinois University (NIU) continued to meet with ILDS agencies and partners regarding possible architecture options for the Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset. NIU also discussed how to potentially position the Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset within a larger Educator Workforce standing dataset spanning from early childhood to post-secondary educators. Included in the agencies and organizations that ILDS worked with on these options were the: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies' (INCRRAA), Northern Illinois University (NIU) IIRC team, Illinois Department of Innovative Technology (DoIT), and Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM).

Detail descriptions of potential approaches that could be used to curate, transfer, and link data from the disparate ILDS agencies were reviewed, edited, discussed, and further adjusted by the ILDS team and involved agencies and partners. Initial drafts of an Educator Workforce Standing Dataset Charter with early childhood being part the first step of curating the whole dataset was collaboratively developed, and in the process of being reviewed by the involved agencies. As the discussions evolved, the following became evident: A simplified, refined version of the concepts and processes for the data pipeline from each ILDS agency to the ILDS was needed. This led to collaboratively developing a process that begins with the ILDS team working with each agency to determine which data elements they will share with the ILDS to construct their agency-centric curated dataset(s) that would be located in Cloud Pak for Data

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(CloudPak) within the ILDS. Once curated datasets are in CloudPak, data from two or more agencies' curated datasets can be used to create standing datasets, including the Educator and Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset. This approach and affiliated processes were shared during the December ILDS Executive Committee Meeting and will be reiterated in the ILDS' 2023 end of year Progress Update that is scheduled for early 2024 distribution.

During Q4, the NIU team determined that the complexity of the architecture for safely and securely transferring data, providing acceptable unique identifiers, and joining data between Illinois Community Colleges Board (ICCB), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires more discussion to determine the optimal process steps and mechanisms. As a result, it was determined that the development of the High School to College to Career standing dataset would temporarily be placed "on hold" until an acceptable architecture and process(es) can be agreed upon by all the involved agencies. Without an acceptable approach agreed upon by all involved agencies to create the curated datasets needed to transfer data for the higher education portion of the Educator Workforce standing dataset, it was determined that the initial focus should be on first developing the Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset using both INCCRRA's Gateway registry data and ISBE's Early Educator Workforce data.

NIU worked with ISBE's Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to iterate through multiple versions of the educator workforce project charter throughout the quarter. The current draft of the charter includes only what is necessary to create the Early Childhood (EC) Educator Workforce standing dataset. This will lay the groundwork for the subsequently required DAUA with the involved agencies, which will then allow the data sharing work to begin. It is currently in ISBE's Data Selection and Review Board (DSRB) queue for review.

In Q4, as the curated dataset was being defined, the ILDS team continued working with IDHS and ISBE in finalizing the data elements ILDS would like represented in the ILDS for public consumption via curated and standing datasets. ISBE's DSRB approved the Data Request for building the ISBE Early Childhood Educator Workforce curated dataset in late December. In December 2023, the ILDS team began scheduling individual meetings with the other six ILDS agencies. These meetings will focus on discussing which data elements each agency would like to share with the ILDS to create agency-centric curated datasets within CloudPak and which data elements the ILDS would like represented in the ILDS for public consumption via their curated dataset.

From a Governance perspective, the ILDS team:

During Q4, NIU planned and facilitated the ILDS Executive Committee Meeting, outlining: the approach for creating the agency-centric curated datasets, how to use data from the curated datasets to create standing datasets (including the Early Childhood Educator Workforce dataset), and how data can then be requested for use from one or more curated and/or standing datasets. Also included was an update on progress on the Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset. Lastly, Illinois' Chief Data

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Officer, led participants through a short design exercise followed by break out sessions where executives were asked to share their future state ideas for the ILDS.

NIU planned and facilitated the ILDS Managing Committee Meeting in October 2023, focusing on soliciting agencies' viewpoints on various topics to help inform the development of a unified workplan to launch the longitudinal data system. Time was also allotted for the Northern Illinois University Education Systems (EdSys) Summer Fellow to present a summary of their project's research findings and recommendations to assist in the future development of a communications strategy for the ILDS.

Support for Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project: In addition to the Educator Workforce Dataset Project, NIU serves as the facilitator for the Support for *Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project*: During Q4, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) organizations agreed upon the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) language that will provide an all-encompassing view of the ongoing relationship, roles and work IECAM will complete on behalf of the Illinois Division of Early Childhood/Illinois Department of Human Services (DEC/IDHS), including a listing of the key data elements IECAM will manage for each of IDHS' early childhood organizations. The agreement is currently working its way through final review and execution within University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) before being sent to IDHS for their final review and signature.

Throughout Q4, detail descriptions of potential approaches that could be used to curate, transfer and link data from the disparate ILDS agencies were reviewed, edited, discussed, and further adjusted by the ILDS team and involved agencies and partners. As the discussions evolved, it became evident that a simplified, refined version of the concepts and processes for the data pipeline from each ILDS agency to the ILDS was needed. This led to collaboratively developing a process that begins with the ILDS team working with each agency to determine which data elements they will share with the ILDS to construct their agency-centric curated dataset(s) that would be located within Cloud Pak for Data (CloudPak) within the ILDS. Once curated datasets are in CloudPak, data from two or more agencies' curated datasets can be used to create standing datasets, including the Early Childhood Participation standing dataset (ECPDS). This approach and affiliated processes were finalized, documented, and shared during the December ILDS Executive Committee Meeting and will be reiterated in ILDS' 2023 end of year Progress Update that is scheduled for early 2024 distribution.

In Q4, as the curated dataset was being defined, the IDLS team continued working with IDHS and ISBE to finalize the data elements ILDS would like represented in the ILDS for public consumption via curated and standing datasets. Additionally, the ILDS team assisted agencies and Collaborative Communications, a vendor contracting with Northern Illinois University's (NIU) EdSys, on activities that will lead to a user-friendly user interface (UI) for the ILDS Early Childhood Participation Dataset (ECPDS). (Please note: this contractor is not funded by the PDG B-5 grant.)

Highlights:

- Collaborative Communications completed its final focus group with the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) Director and the IHSA's Data Task Force.

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- The ILDS team assisted Collaborative Communications in developing a follow-up informal questionnaire that was distributed to a wide array of stakeholders, including Birth to Five councils, Head Start grantees, researchers, agencies, and partners.
- Feedback from the interviews, focus groups and follow-up informal questionnaire helped inform Collaborative Communication’s final UI mockup designs for IECAM, as well as its drafting of a deliverables’ road map for the ECPDS.
- The ILDS team and IECAM used Collaborative Communications’ roadmap to determine the staging of its development efforts, including the first round of UI deliverables to be ready for use in the refreshed IECAM by the end of the state’s fiscal year, June 30, 2024.
- The ILDS team worked with Collaborative Communications in brainstorming, reviewing, editing, and iterating to complete the design of an ILDS video. Nearing completion (with only minor tweaks post stakeholder review remaining), this video will assist in introducing stakeholders and potential funders to the value of ILDS and the ECPDS.

Regarding ILDS data requests:

Three data requests are pending, awaiting the final execution of the IDHS and IECAM agreement:

The DCFS data request to research early childhood experiences of children in care has been approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and IDHS, and the draft Data Access and Use Agreement (DAUA) that will be needed before data sharing can occur is in the process of being reviewed.

The Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborate (IWERC) data request to study early childhood pathways using data from the ECPDS is in the process of having its request language initially approved by IDHS and ISBE. This will hopefully shorten the elapsed time to execute the request after the prerequisite IDHS-IECAM contract and DCFS DAUA are executed.

The IECAM data request to use the ECPDS to develop and build the front-end tools and products for the refreshed IECAM is in the process of being developed.

From a governance perspective, the ILDS team planned and facilitated:

ILDS’ bi-annual Executive Steering Committee (EC) meeting in December 2023, which focused on sharing the processes for creating agency-centric curated datasets, combining data from two or more curated datasets into standing datasets, and how to request data for research and analysis. Also included, Illinois’ Chief Data Officer, led participants through a short design exercise followed by breakouts where executives were asked to share their ideas for the future state of the ILDS.

ILDS’ periodic Managing Committee (MC) meeting in October, which included soliciting feedback on informing the development of a unified ILDS launch workplan and the NIU EdSys summer Fellow sharing a summary of her project’s research findings and recommendations to assist in the future development of an ILDS communications strategy.

2. Problems/Challenges

Educator Workforce Dataset Project: The NIU Team shared, based on the need to further develop the data definitions and an appropriate request, the ISBE data will not be ready for transfer to their Data Manager (NIU IIRC) for data cleansing and organizing until the first quarter of 2024. This means connecting the data to CloudPak will also be delayed. Depending on the initial data transfer by ISBE and

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time needed for NIU IIRC to complete cleaning and organizing the data, the current estimate for connecting the data is the end of the Q2 (2024). To address the timing issue, a no-cost extension was approved by ISBE.

Support for Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project: While still in process, much time was spent during Q4 in understanding and developing a single, comprehensive data sharing agreement between DEC/IDHS and IECAM. This agreement provides an all-encompassing view of the ongoing relationship, roles, and work IECAM will complete on behalf of DEC/IDHS. The contract language has been agreed-upon, and the agreement is pending final review and execution, the multi-month delay of other contracts and deliverables will be ended in early 2024.

3. Significant findings and events

Support for Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project:

Christina Krasov, the consultant assisting with the Illinois Early Childhood single agency transformation's data needs, contacted the ILDS team to set up an interview in the new year to begin more detailed discussions regarding early childhood data, ILDS, and research and analysis.

ILDS will take part in the state's Early Learning Council (ELC)'s Research, Evaluation and Data (RED) Committee's January 2024 Planning Meeting. The meeting's focus will be to determine how best to integrate ILDS into RED's work during the planning of the new agency's transformation, including presenting at some of its committee meetings in 2024.

Multiple deliverables are contingent upon the execution of the IDHS data agreement with IECAM. Included in delayed deliverables is the IECAM data request that will allow IECAM to access and work with INCCRRA's Gateways Registry data for inclusion in IDHS' curated dataset and ultimately in the Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset.

After identifying the following risks, the Educator Workforce Committee met and agreed to request a "no-cost" extension to address the risks and allow more time to complete the project end products:

- ability for NIU IIRC to connect the ELIS and EIS data within the Educator Curated Dataset (originally called ELIS/EIS) due to it not being available
- ability for other agencies to connect data to the ILDS (in particular Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), IDHS, and Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC))
- potential dependency of the UIC research project on the EC Educator Workforce Data and the timing of having needed data available
- ability (short and longer term) to obtain the needed resources for both agency efforts and future data products that will need to use various data from these datasets in combination

Work continues in determining what data will be included in the final project.

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4. Dissemination activities

N/A

5. Equity-related activities

Home Visitor Workforce Needs Assessment Project: INCCRRA conducted an analysis for the Home Visitor Workforce Needs Assessment to determine the best locations to host focus groups. They considered areas of the state where there were a large proportion of BIPOC home visitors, as well as the inclusion of home visitors who worked in rural communities. Funding has been included in the grant to allow INCCRRA to reimburse participants for their mileage to attend focus group meetings, which is expected to help reduce a potential barrier to participation.

6. Other activities

Support for Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project: The ILDS team is continuing to provide the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) ongoing assistance to negotiate three-year fixed price contracts with Head Start grantees' MIS vendors, COPA and ChildPlus. To date, COPA has agreed in principle and a draft contract has been sent for their review and approval. ChildPlus has not yet agreed to accept this change or the state's terms for a 3-year contract.

The ILDS team continued assisting the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) in securing data from Head Start grantees that have signed a DAUA but do not use either COPA or ChildPlus as their MIS vendors. In Q4, the ILDS team continued assisting DEC/IDHS in requesting CDDA IDs for the already received Head Start data, and to receive approval for IECAM to access the CDDA-IDs for IDHS' Home Visiting Data.

NIU continued its work to secure access to the needed CDDA-IDs for the DCFS data already in CloudPak so that data can be joined to the data within the ECPDS. NIU also continued to secure a State Data Practice (SDP)/IDHS staging database to replace the SDP/Department of Innovative Technology (DoIT) database currently being used to stage Early Childhood data before transferring the data to CloudPak.

In December 2023, the ILDS team began working with the NIU's EdSys Communications Director on an ILDS messaging board via facilitated brainstorming sessions. Deliverables from these sessions will serve as inputs into developing a draft ILDS communications strategy and communications material delivery road map. Lastly, the ILDS Playbook continued to be updated as appropriate.

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

Home Visiting Workforce Needs Assessment Project: INCCRRA was approved for a no-cost extension that will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. During the no-cost extension period, INCCRRA will create a final report which will include the findings from the focus groups and will provide recommendations to share with state agency partners. The final draft will be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for review and approval in March 2024. Dissemination activities will begin once the final report is approved by ISBE.

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Integrate Gateways Registry Data into ILDS Project: INCCRRA was approved for a no-cost extension that will begin January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. During the no-cost extension period, INCCRRA will upload the FY22 data file in January 2024, then will investigate if there is enough data from years FY17-FY18 to upload in the Cloud Pak. The FY23 data file is outside of the scope of this grant but will be uploaded once INCCRRA's internal analysis is complete.

Educator Workforce Dataset Project: During the next reporting period, NIU will complete the following activities: 1.) a proof-of-concept project will be completed with ICCB and IBHE to test the CDDA ID with ICCB and IBHE data within CloudPak using the annually completed "remediation" process, 2.) finalize and fully execute IECAM contract with IDHS 3.) establish Data Agreement for IECAM to manage Gateways data, 4.) develop and finalize a timeline with ISBE for completing the curation of the Early Childhood Educator curated dataset, 5.) receive approval of the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Charter from ISBE's Data Sharing Review Board (DSRB), 6.) collaboratively develop and submit DAUA for Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset based on approved Charter to involved agencies for their review and approval, 7.) monitor drafted DAUA for Early Childhood Educator Workforce standing dataset until it is fully executed by involved agencies, 8.) finalize approach for connecting ICCB, IBHE, IDHS data to ILDS, 9.) Complete ILDS messaging board brainstorming sessions with NIU EdSystems' Director of Communications, 10.) complete drafting ILDS communications strategy and communications material delivery road map, 11.) distribute the end of FY 2023 ILDS Progress Report and 12.) plan and facilitate ILDS Managing Committee Meeting.

Local Support for Developing Regional/Local Data Reports and Systems Project: Activities planned for the next reporting period include: 1.) monitor the IDHS data agreement with IECAM until the agreement is fully executed, the data agreement is currently being reviewed for signature with UIUC for IECAM and will then move to IDHS for review and final signature. Note: This deliverable is required to be completed before multiple other deliverables can be completed. 2.) monitor the process and agreements with IDHS and NIU CDDA team until the CDDA IDs can be requested for Head Start data, 3.) monitor the process with IDHS and NIU CDDA team until IECAM has access to IDHS' Home Visiting CDDA IDs, 4.) monitor the IDHS Agreement with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) until it's fully executed. This agreement will allow DCFS to begin its data request within CloudPak.

Note: This deliverable is dependent upon first reaching final agreement and execution of IDHS data agreement with IECAM. 5.) using CECIDS' eligibility approach, rerun the program using updated ACS 2021 data both with and without administrative data, 6.) complete and submit IECAM's Data Request for developing and building front end tools and products for IECAM's website to ISBE's DSRB, 7.) receive initial approval by IDHS and ISBE of the language used in the IWERC Data Request for ECPDS data, 8.) work with IECAM to design the underlying reports to support ECPDS' Front End, 9.) complete drafting ILDS communications strategy and communications material delivery road map and 10.) distribute the end of FY 2023 ILDS Progress Report.

Activity Two: Develop or Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

The contract for this activity is pending therefore work related to this project has not begun yet.

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2. Problems/Challenges

N/A

3. Significant findings and events

N/A

4. Dissemination activities

N/A

5. Equity-related activities

N/A

6. Other activities

N/A

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

N/A

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

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

Staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC) Project: Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) is the vendor that has been selected to staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC). During Q4, the FAC held three meetings. The October meeting focused on working towards FAC goals. The November meeting included a focus group which was facilitated by NORC and a presentation from Wendy McCullough, consultant for the Illinois Department of Human Services regarding the work of the Early Learning Council (ELC) Integration and Alignment Committee. During the December meeting, FAC members presented [General Recommendations for Engaging Parents in Early Childhood Systems at the State Level](#) and engaged in a Q&A with ELC and state leaders about how the recommendations would be used.

In Q4, there were eight FAC members who participated in a Working Across Cultures training led by COFI. The training used personal storytelling as a vehicle for discussions of equity and how to work together. In November 2023, IAFC and COFI co-facilitated an in-person training retreat for FAC members at Starved Rock State Park. IAFC worked with the FAC co-chairs and an FAC parent leader to plan meetings, take votes, record the minutes, and support the overall operations of the FAC.

IAFC distributed monthly stipends to FAC members to compensate them for their time and expertise.

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Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: Wendy McCullough, LLC serves as the consultant to lead the Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project. During Q4, Wendy McCullough began to socialize the Integration and Alignment Committee of the Early Learning Council (IAC) directional recommendations to align early childhood education and care (ECEC) regional intermediary functions with additional stakeholders and solicit more input on considerations for implementation planning. This included 1.) presenting the directional recommendations to participants from the initial listening sessions: ECEC service providers, staff of regional intermediaries, and the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC), 2.) helping the IAC co-chair present the recommendations in an Interagency Team meeting to solicit early feedback from State leaders who will be essential to implementing the recommendations, sharing the recommendations with the State agencies participating in the AMCHP technical assistance, whose work is directly related to one of the recommendations (integrating intake and referral services) and developing a presentation and pre-read to seek approval from the Early Learning Council Executive Committee.

Wendy McCullough also completed a draft final report to document the approach, findings, and recommendations from the IAC's work on this priority in 2023 and shared it with the IAC co-chairs to begin the leadership review process to finalize and prepare for public distribution of the approach and outcomes.

Developing Framework for How the State will Integrate Family Voice in Policymaking:

NORC at the University of Chicago will facilitate the development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement process to authentically engage and elevate the voice of parents, providers, and communities in developing recommendations that prioritize equity as foundational to early childhood education and care systems-building within Illinois. In Q4, the NORC team conducted the virtual Family Advisory Committee (FAC) focus group with Illinois Action for Children (IAC) and shared the draft parent discussion guide with IAC for feedback. NORC also acquired initial IRB approval to conduct nine focus groups with parents, providers, and stakeholders and drafted a direct provider form to collect information about providers who might be interested in participating in the focus groups. The NORC team revised discussion guides, flyers, and interest forms for parents, providers, and stakeholders based on the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) feedback.

In Q4, the NORC team began reaching out to key organizational stakeholders to facilitate an equitable nominating process for potential participants in the respective focus groups. Virtual meetings were held with several organizations that work with young children and their families to discuss recruitment for the focus groups with parents, providers, and stakeholders. NORC scheduled virtual meetings with additional organizations to discuss focus group recruitment. In December 2023, NORC also received interest forms from over 80 families, and 4 providers.

Per the request of ISBE and the Illinois Office of the Governor, the NORC team revised the budget to reflect new funds for initial sense-making activities. The sense-making proposed in September 2023 sought to involve additional community outreach and discussion sessions focused on creating a set of recommendations for involving family voices to inform policy and decision making, by holding convenings with key partners to understand the synthesis and framework emerging from across the nine

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focus groups. The NORC team updated the budget proposed in September 2023 for sense-making to match funds from the Illinois Office of the Governor by reducing the process to only include initial sense-making activities.

2. Problems/Challenges

Staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC) Project:

Due to the FAC work beginning later in the year than anticipated and several requests for FAC feedback during Q3 and Q4, IAFC proposed the mentoring component of the original scope of work be moved into a no-cost extension contract. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) approved IAFC's no cost extension request, and the no cost extension period will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end December 30, 2024. Additionally, the FAC adjusted its goal about embedding a protocol for family voice to extend beyond the Early Learning Council (ELC) due to the restructuring of the state's early childhood system.

Review of Intermediary Structures Project: During Q4, it was difficult to schedule time to present the recommendations to the ELC Executive Committee to confirm their approval, which is a necessary step before moving forward (per ELC bylaws).

Developing Framework for How the State will Integrate Family Voice in Policymaking:

The NORC Team had planned to begin reaching out to organizational stakeholders by the end of November 2023. However, they were waiting on a few documents to be translated into Spanish. Those have been completed and the NORC Team have begun entering the translations into their Qualtrics interest forms.

3. Significant findings and events

Staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC) Project:

In Q4, the FAC focused on accomplishing their two remaining goals:

- Provide family voice on ELC and committee work that impacts families through engagement opportunities, and work with the ELC to embed a protocol for including family voice in the work of the ELC, including revisiting how the ELC/FAC work together.
- Review and respond to the ISBE Advancing Preschool Inclusion in Community-Based Early Childhood Education Programs report on barriers and potential recommendations for inclusion related to disabilities, racial disparities, economic disparities, and culturally responsive practices in early childhood education and care settings to identify gaps in data, themes, and patterns highlight findings about FAC member's life experiences. We will convey this information to the ELC and ELC subcommittees by December 2023.

The first of these two goals was accomplished in December 2023 with the creation of the [General Recommendations for Engaging Parents in Early Childhood Systems at the State Level](#) and the facilitated conversation with the ELC. The second goal was accomplished with the finalization of the FAC's response to ISBE's Advancing Preschool Inclusion in Community-Based Early Childhood Education Programs.

In Q4, IAFC reached out to the ELC Integration and Alignment Committee to share feedback from FAC members who attended the August meeting. Key takeaways for engaging families included, 1.) more

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scaffolding for families to help them understand the purpose of the meeting and allow them to follow along during the meeting, such as definitions and key players and 2.) provide direction or a clear invitation on how families can contribute during the meeting. In response, Wendy McCollough, the consultant working with the Integration and Alignment Committee, offered to provide a special presentation geared for FAC members at an upcoming meeting to “close the loop” on feedback FAC members provided over the summer. The presentation was held during the November FAC meeting.

Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: All stakeholders from the field responded positively to the directional recommendations and provided thoughtful advice to support successful implementation planning. The FAC also agreed these changes would help families and children, and were grateful to hear the outcomes from a process that they participated in. The Interagency Team also demonstrated support for these recommendations.

Developing Framework for How the State will Integrate Family Voice in Policymaking:

In Q4. The NORC Team held the first parent focus group with the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council.

4. Dissemination activities

Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: Once approved by State leadership, the final report that summarizes the Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project will be emailed to the IAC committee members directly and be made accessible to the public.

5. Equity-related activities

Staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC) Project: During Q4, IAFC supported the following equity-related activities: 1.) provided simultaneous Spanish translation for the three FAC meetings that were convened in Q4. The simultaneous translation was particularly helpful during the November 2023 meeting, during which several Spanish-speaking parents attended and were able to connect with NORC for a Spanish-speaking focus group on embedding family voice across the state. The capacity building support IAFC has offered to the FAC during these meetings uses an equity lens, as evidenced by the opportunity to connect NORC directly with historically underserved Spanish-speaking families and 2.) the Working Across Cultures training that FAC members participated in October 2023 increased their knowledge and skills regarding integrating equity into the ways they work. This will be a helpful frame for FAC members to incorporate as they continue to build their capacity and leadership in the parent engagement space.

Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: IAC meetings were open to the public and attended by about 50-60 participants each time (5x more than the appointed Integration and Alignment Committee members). This provided a venue for transparency in the process and an opportunity to gather more diverse perspectives.

Developing Framework for How the State will Integrate Family Voice in Policymaking:

Materials to recruit participants and focus group discussion guides were translated into Spanish. In translating participant facing materials, NORC aims to broaden participation and ensure they reach a

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culturally and linguistically diverse group of participants. During virtual meetings with key organizational stakeholders, NORC continued to ask for suggestions regarding strategies to recruit diverse populations. Stakeholders provided a list additional organizations to the NORC Team.

6. Other activities

Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: The no cost extension and supplemental award were approved for this work, so it will continue into 2024 with the following added to the scope of work: Develop guidance on what implementation planning might require should the directional recommendations be approved, including 1.) who would work on these recommendations? 2.) how would the State approach implementation planning? and 3.) what external resources may be needed?

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

Staff the Family Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council (FAC) Project: Illinois Action for Children was approved for a no cost extension which will begin January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. During the next reporting period, Illinois Action for Children will distribute stipends to FAC members, collaborate with NORC regarding FAC focus group and other family engagement efforts and develop a mentoring plan for new parent leaders.

Review of Regional Intermediary Structures Project: Wendy McCullough received approval for a no cost extension to complete the final report and conduct public-facing dissemination activities. The no cost extension period will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. She also received a Supplemental Award to expand the work of the current project. During the next reporting period, Wendy McCullough will 1.) continue to schedule and facilitate monthly strategizing meetings with IAC co-chairs, 2.) present IAC recommendations to ELC Executive Committee for approval to move forward to next phase, 3.) incorporate co-chair feedback into final report and share with State leadership for final review/approval; develop dissemination plan, 4.) develop approach and work plan for the objectives of the supplemental award focused on developing guidance on what implementation planning might require should the directional recommendations be approved, 5.) begin to work on supplemental award objectives, including communicating approach with key stakeholders and 6.) complete objectives for supplemental award; present to Interagency Team to support decision making on which IAC recommendations to approve or when to begin implementation planning.

Developing Framework for How the State will Integrate Family Voice in Policymaking:

NORC received approval for a no cost extension to complete the deliverables outlined in the 2023 PDG B-5 Planning Grant. The no cost extension period will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. NORC also received a Supplemental Award to expand the work of the current project. During the next reporting period, the NORC Team will complete the following deliverables: 1.) share parent and provider interest form information with partners at ISBE and the Illinois Office of the Governor to identify target populations, 2.) schedule additional focus groups and 3.) facilitate additional virtual meetings with organizational stakeholders.

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

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

Prior Learning Assessment Project: The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referrals (INCCRRA) led the work related to the Prior Learning Assessment Project. The following institutions were piloted for this project: Heartland Community College, McHenry College, Kishwaukee College, Eastern Illinois University, National Louis University, Governors State University, Western Illinois University, National Louis University and College of Lake County. Note: Western Illinois University and National Louis University have offered the Prior Learning Assessment in both English and Spanish while College of Lake County offered the Spanish assessment.

In Q4, faculty provided institutional updates on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) efforts, and a final review of PLA recommendations were shared for input regarding the final report. Recommendations included, 1.) allow students a maximum of two attempts to retake the Prior Learning Assessment, 2.) credit for the PLA assessment should not exceed 12 semester hours (18 quarter hours), nor should it be less than 8 semester hours (10 quarter hours) for students who demonstrate proficiency in all 12 competencies and 3.) a student must evidence a minimum of 12 months of working in the ECE field to be eligible to participate in the PLA assessment.

During the final faculty meeting held in November 2023, the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) Data Consultant shared data sets regarding race, age, numbers of years in the field, language, and education attainment of the PLA learners.

In Q4, INCCRRA began the compilation of the 2023 PDG B-5 Planning Grant-Prior Learning Assessment Final Report. The draft report which was written by the C-BEN consultant, has been shared with state agency leaders for review. It was also shared with the Illinois State Board of Education for additional input.

The filming for the PLA promotional/information video began in Q4. The videographer finalized the script and cast the actors using a diverse range of actors that mirror Illinois' early childhood education and care workforce.

Pyramid Model Implementation Project: The Pyramid Model Consortium serves as the consultant to facilitate the work related to the Pyramid Model Implementation Project. In Q4, Family Child Care Programs completed the following professional development: Birth-Five eModules, Trauma-Informed Care & the Pyramid Model, Implicit Bias, and Wellness. Coaches met with programs for individual coaching and to facilitate local communities of practices. Programs and coaches attended the final Family Child Care & the Pyramid Model statewide event in November 2023. The event featured Jeff Johnson who presented on *Self-Care & Relationships and Play and the 8 Sensory Systems*. The Pilot Evaluation was created and distributed to programs and the second Benchmarks of Quality was completed by participating programs.

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Cross Sector Coordination Major Activities and Accomplishments

Early Intervention identified Child and Family Connections (CFC) sites ready for Implementation. The Pyramid Model Consortium developed a data collection template for STAR NET and Early Childhood Professional Learning (ECPL) to document the number of Pyramid trainings being offered. PMC updated the cross-sector IL Pyramid Implementation Guide and Birth-Five Illinois is a new active member of the State Leadership Team.

2. Problems/Challenges

N/A

3. Significant findings and events

Prior Learning Assessment Project: Demographic data was shared by the C-BEN Data Consultant during the November 2023 faculty meeting, highlights included, 1.) 92% of the English learners were female, while 89% of the Spanish learners were female. 2.) English learners identified as 35% white, 25% Hispanic and 24% African American, while Spanish learners identified as 84% Hispanic, and 4% white, 3.) nearly 40% of the English learner participants reported their highest education level as a GED or high school diploma, 4.) 30% of the Spanish participants reported their highest education level as a GED or high school diploma, 5.) the impact of the years of experience on proficiency results showed a correlation between years in the field and proficiency levels and 6.) the number of years in the field appears to be a reliable indicator for increased levels of proficiency attainment for English PLA learners. Those with 5+ years have a proficiency rate of 70%.

Pyramid Model Implementation Project: In Q4, the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) moved IL Pyramid documents to the PMC website due to the sunsetting of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. Key findings from the Family Child Care & the Pyramid Model Pilot revealed, 1.) over 50% of respondents reported they were not familiar with Pyramid Model prior to the pilot, 2.) 92% found the pilot to be very beneficial; 8% found it to be beneficial, 3.) 73% recognized numerous improvements from their first Benchmark of Quality (BOQ) to their 2nd BOQ and 4.) of the individual coaching, community of practice, and statewide cohort sessions, the majority of programs found the community of practice to be the most beneficial.

4. Dissemination activities

Prior Learning Assessment Project: In Q4, updates regarding the PLA project were shared at the Virtual Conversation Meeting which was attended by ECE faculty at higher education institutions from throughout Illinois. During the meeting it was announced that PLA assessments would continue and if any institutions were interested in joining, they should contact INCCRRA staff. The Prior Learning Assessment Project was also presented during the 2023 PDG B-5 Annual Convening Meeting which was held in Bethesda, MD in December 2023.

Pyramid Model Implementation Project: In Q4, the Pyramid Model Consortium disseminated the Six Phases of Implementation Manual to Pyramid Process Coaches and the Pilot Evaluation was distributed to programs.

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5. Equity-related activities

Prior Learning Assessment Project: During Q4, English and Spanish assessments continued to be offered to learners participating in the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) project from the participating pilot higher education institutions. There were fourteen (14) learners who participated.

6. Other activities

Pyramid Model Implementation Project:

During Q4, the Pyramid Model Consortium worked with the State Leadership Team (SLT) to develop a plan to scale and sustain the Pyramid Model curriculum in Illinois. The following recommendations were highlighted during discussions:

Planning for Pyramid Scale-up & Sustainability:

- work with cross sector agencies to implement Pyramid Community wide
- design a “single point of entry” for all programs interested in becoming a Pyramid implementation site
- work towards coordination of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) and Pyramid Model practices through the NCPMI (National Center of Pyramid Model Innovations opportunity
- build relationships with private funders to support the Professional Development Network (PDN) and supporting programs that would like to become implementation sites
- increase number of children served in PM implementation sites including Chicago
- SLT members continue cross sector collaboration to expand Pyramid Implementation and
- provide professional development for process coaches in Head Start, Child Care and ISBE
- formalize the PIDS system through the Tiered System of Support for State Leadership Team (SLT), Process Coaches and programs to analyze data
- the SLT provides ongoing training and support for Process Coaches who, in turn, train and support community and program staff and Leadership Teams
- the SLT creates and puts in place a quality-assurance mechanism (e.g., certification, approval) to ensure that Program Coaches can provide training in the evidence-based practices accurately and effectively
- develop mechanisms to communicate with families

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

Prior Learning Assessment Project: INCCRA completed their contract deliverables outlined in the 2023 PDG B-5 Planning Grant. In Q4, INCCRA developed the first draft of the final report which included Prior Learning Assessment project workforce data, credit earned by incumbent workforce members, and recommendations for statewide scale up. The draft report was submitted to ISBE for review and edits. The final report will be complete by January 30, 2024.

Pyramid Model Implementation Project: The Pyramid Model Consortium completed their contract deliverables as outlined in the 2023 PDG B-5 Planning Grant. A final report will be completed by January 30, 2024.

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Activity Five: Support Program Quality Improvement

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

Pilot Strategies for Inclusive Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Project: The School Association for Special Education in DuPage (SASED) serves as the contractor to lead the work related to the Pilot Strategies for Inclusive Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Project. SASED has sub-contracted with Early CHOICES, Inc. to facilitate the activities listed in the contract deliverables. Early CHOICES, Inc. worked with the three communities that were selected to receive a \$25,000 stipend to serve as Community Inclusion Teams (CIT's). The three communities that were selected include Collinsville, Quad Cities (Moline area) and Peoria County. Each community signed a contract with SASED and have been approved for payment. Collinsville, Peoria and the Quad Cities hosted meetings in September 2023. Each CIT leader also met with Early CHOICES to plan the work and the agenda for the meeting.

Early CHOICES, Inc. continued to interview programs to identify major cost components and drivers, and any policy changes necessary for communities to implement itinerant services. The program finalized the Inclusion brochure updates from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and sent the brochure to be translated into the top five languages that are represented across Illinois early childhood households as reported by ISBE. A copy of the brochure can be found here:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Inclusion-Brochure.pdf>

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners: The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning serves as the contractor to lead the work related to the Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners Project. Early Childhood Professional Learning (ECPL) is a division within The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning that facilitates the activities outlined in the deliverables of the contract. During Q4, eight programs submitted ISBE Home Language Survey (HLS) data. The survey results revealed 1.) 564 children were screened with the ISBE Home Language Survey (HLS), 2.) 468 indicated only English on the HLS. No further screening needed, 3.) 72 indicated a language other than English (LOTE) in the home and 4.) 56 children were screened with the English Pre-IPT. In November 2023, 13 children were not screened at one community-based organization due to the following issues that made them ineligible for the Pre-IPT:

- Five children had reporting errors on HLS
- Two students use American Sign Language
- Six children were enrolled in Prevention Initiative program not Preschool for All
- Three children were chronically absent at another community-based organization and not screened with the Pre-IPT

In December 2023, a two-step screening process was completed for participating Round 1 PFA-CBO programs.

Multi-State Research on Early Intervention (EI) Models: The Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)

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was fully executed in August 2023. During Q4, the University of Illinois Early Intervention Training Program (EITP) identified and hired two Project Coordinators for the PDG B-5 Modified Service Delivery Project Planning Phase. The Project Coordinators bring experience as parents of young children accessing the EI system, early interventionists serving families and one of them served as a Service Coordinator and has worked with Head Start. The experience and perspectives of each Project Coordinator will lend insights into the planning phase.

In October 2023, initial data pulls were requested and received from the state's data system including referral and census data, active Individualized Family Support Plans (IFSP) data, children in care, Medicaid eligible, unhoused, workforce data, and current service delay data. In November 2023, the Project Coordinators began reviewing existing data sets and the recommendations from Center for Equity and Excellence (CEE), as well as recommendations from the Modified Service Delivery Workgroup. Documents related to this work such as the drafted Theory of Action and the Early Intervention Training Program (EITP) 2023 Workforce Summary were included in the document review process.

During Q4, the Project Coordinators met with the EITP Leadership Team to receive clarifications regarding recommendations and discuss possibilities and limitations of recommended policy/procedure modifications. In December 2023, the Project Coordinators completed the following tasks: 1.) began to identify necessary components of the professional development plan that will need to be in place to support early intervention personnel in meeting the needs of families with more complex circumstances, 2.) scheduled a meeting for January 2024 with the EITP Leadership Team to more closely examine the state level data available to support determination of which areas of the state the pilots will be administered and 3.) began to identify criteria that can be used to determine areas of the state where the pilots will be administered.

2. Problems/Challenges

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners: One program decided to drop out of the project before administering the ISBE Home Language Survey. The director mentioned that their barriers to participating included being short staffed and ongoing difficulties with parental involvement. The Program Director also said she would prefer to keep just one question about home language on the registration form rather than using the two-question ISBE HLS form. A few programs also cited staffing issues (e.g. illness, planned vacation time, death in family, extended medical leave, etc.) as delaying the administration of some Pre-IPT screenings.

Multi-State Research on Early Intervention (EI) Models: There was a delay in finalizing the IGA between ISBE and IDHS. IDHS accounted for the time lost by reducing the original scope of work and the budget amount. The scope of work was scaled back to only include a Phase 1 planning process with the following deliverables:

- Identify Project Coordinator
- Analyze Service Delay Data/ baseline data
- Identify necessary modifications to policy and procedure
- Develop a PD plan
- Recruitment and training (may occur in 2 phases)

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- Identification of 1 area for initial pilot phase.
- Identification of 2 additional areas for 2nd phase
- Develop evaluation plan
- Additional planning procedures and processes as needed.

IDHS was approved for a no-cost extension which will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. This will allow IDHS time to complete their contract deliverables.

3. Significant findings and events

Pilot Strategies for Inclusive Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Project: In Q3, the CIT's shared an update with the advisory group and Early CHOICES, Inc. began reviewing a draft policy scan. Early CHOICES, Inc. offered ongoing technical assistance and professional development to the communities that were not selected to serve as a Community Inclusion Team.

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners: Since the beginning of this project, ECPL has communicated with over 60 PFA CBO programs representing an estimated 9,700 PFA slots. The project target is to screen 7,500 children in PFA CBO programs across the state. During Q4, ECPL invited over 30 CBO programs to the first kickoff meeting. Collectively, these programs were anticipating having approximately 4,700 PFA slots available during the 2023-2024 school year. ECPL staff made phone calls to 30 additional CBOs to personally invite them to attend the second kickoff meeting. These programs estimated having approximately 5,000 available PFA slots. As of December 2023, there were eight programs with an estimated 1,048 PFA slots committed to participate in the project. Some participating CBOs decided to limit the number of sites engaging with this project. As a result, only 564 children of the estimated 1,048 slots were screened with the ISBE Home Language Survey. When indicated, children also received an English Pre-IPT. One program with an estimated 80 PFA slots initially committed to participating but withdrew from the project before administering the ISBE Home Language Survey.

Multi-State Research on Early Intervention (EI) Models: During Q4, IDHS, in partnership with the University of Illinois, hired two Project Coordinators. The Project Coordinators began reviewing and analyzing existing data related to the work of this project.

4. Dissemination activities

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners:

In Q4, an overview of the Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners project was presented to the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education (IACBE) EC Subcommittee. This project was also presented at the 2023 PDG B-5 Annual Convening Meeting that was held in Bethesda, MD.

5. Equity-related activities

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners:

The English Learner Identification Project is an equity initiative. According to Illinois School Code, PFA programs operated by school districts are required to screen, identify and serve English Learners. PFA programs operated by CBOs do not have these requirements. This project seeks to determine, for the

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first time, the number of English Learners in PFA community-based organizations across the state by screening an estimated 7,600 children using the two-step ISBE screening process of the Home Language Survey and, when indicated, the Pre-IPT.

Multi-State Research on Early Intervention (EI) Models: The PDG B-5 Multi-State Research on Early Intervention Models Project is equity focused as the Project Coordinators will be responsible for developing a plan for the launch of three sites that will pilot a modified service delivery model that addresses the complex needs of families who are experiencing significant adversity. The goal of the pilot will be to reduce the waitlists for families who have experienced disparities in access to services and to improve the outcomes for infants and toddlers in underserved communities by providing them with access to culturally responsive, high-quality Early Intervention (EI) services.

6. Other activities

N/A

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

Pilot Strategies for Inclusive Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Project: In Q4, Early CHOICES, Inc. will 1.) continue Communities of Practice for CIT leaders, 2.) develop an action plan for each CIT and 3.) create materials as needed to support community-based organizations and school districts.

Developing a Common Process to Identify English Language Learners: The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning was approved for a no-cost extension. The no-cost extension period will begin on January 1, 2024 and will end on December 30, 2024. Activities planned for the next reporting period include: 1.) ECPL will contact each new PFA CBO grantee by phone and complete the 1:1 survey, 2.) create new timeline for Round 2 grantees and 3.) ECPL will work with DFSS and ISBE to understand PFA CBO data issues related to English Learners.

Multi-State Research on Early Intervention (EI) Models: The activities planned for the next period include: 1.) analyze service delay data/ baseline data, 2.) identify necessary modifications to policy and procedure, 3.) begin the development of a professional development plan, 4.) recruitment and training for pilot- identification of one area for the initial pilot phase, 5) recruitment and training for pilot- Identification of two additional areas for Phase II of the project and 6.) create additional planning procedures and processes as needed.

Program Performance Evaluation

1. Major activities and accomplishments during this period

Program Performance Evaluation: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) contracted with the University of Illinois- Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) to facilitate the Program Performance Evaluation during the 2023 PDG B-5 Planning Grant cycle. In Q4, IWERC administered and summarized the Continuous Quality Improvement Reports (CQI) #1 & #2. The IWERC Team completed a review of data elements at the various state agencies and synthesized issues. IWERC

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is awaiting a meeting with ISBE's early childhood data unit. IWERC collected and revised metrics for each PDG B-5 grant activity based on CQI Form #2 responses. The metrics were curated into a single list.

During this reporting period, IWERC disseminated a statewide early childhood survey widely using networks of state and local early childhood providers and advocates. As of December 2023, IWERC received over 1,000 responses.

2. Problems/Challenges

N/A

3. Significant findings and events

CQI Reports #1 and #2 indicated shared issues across PDG B-5 Project Teams. IWERC shared the CQI memos with ISBE, resulting in confirmation of no-cost extensions to alleviate project concerns.

4. Dissemination activities

In Q4, IWERC disseminated the statewide early childhood survey in English and Spanish using networks of state and local early childhood providers and advocates.

5. Equity-related activities

IWERC made a concerted effort to recruit diverse survey participants across the state by disseminating the survey through state- and local-level early childhood groups.

6. Other activities

N/A

7. Activities planned for next reporting period

Activities planned for the next reporting period include: 1.) create memo for ISBE based on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Report #3, 2.) meet with ISBE and IDHS to review and discuss data elements, 3.) produce initial summary of survey results, 4.) discuss web location of database with IECAM, new ECE agency leadership, and others and 5,) finalize metrics for all completed vendors