

Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)  
Performance Progress Report - PDG B-5 Renewal  
Quarter 3 - Date: October 26, 2021

**Activity 1: Statewide Needs Assessment**

**1. Major activities and accomplishments**

*Needs Assessment Follow-up*

In Q3, the Needs Assessment Kick-off meeting with GOECD, American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) was held on July 29, 2021. In Renewal Year Two, the Needs Assessment will address the following goals:

Project A: To produce a data matrix based on gaps identified in the already-completed initial Needs Assessment, convene stakeholders, and facilitate meetings to build consensus to produce recommendations to resolve existing data gaps in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) system.

Project B: To design and conduct a qualitative study to better understand from families of children both prenatal to three years and three to five years how they engage with the ECEC system, what their needs are, and how the ECEC system might better address those needs.

Following the project launch, GOECD held weekly check-in meetings with AIR to develop a list of stakeholders to support Project A and Project B. During the month of September, AIR completed its first deliverable and submitted a data matrix to GOECD for review and approval. Additionally, invitations were sent to Project A stakeholders requesting their participation in several focus group meetings.

*Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out*

By the end of Q3, all data was acquired, and data assurance is in process. Since only one risk indicator could be disaggregated for ages 0-3, it was decided to use the ages 0-5 risk profile from the full Risk and Reach report. This age range provides a broader picture of the environment in which infants and toddlers live and grow.

*PN3 Policy Roadmap*

The literature review has been completed, and the state policy review of infant/toddler family and center-based care policies has begun. The discussion guide and recruitment materials for four to five focus groups with child care providers have been completed. A subcontractor to analyze the qualitative data gathered through the focus groups has been secured.

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**2. Problems – N/A**

**3. Significant findings and events**

*Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out*

This project has highlighted the limited number of indicators that can be disaggregated by ages 0-3 as well as the limited race and ethnicity data available.

**4. Dissemination activities – N/A**

**5. Other activities – N/A**

**6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

*Needs Assessment Follow-up*

In Q4, AIR will conduct meetings with the stakeholders identified for Project A and Project B. Based on the survey responses, Project A meetings will be held on the following dates:

- October 5<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM
- October 8<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM
- October 14<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM
- October 20<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

An invitation to participate in the Needs Assessment project will be sent to Project B stakeholders during the first week of October 2021.

*Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out*

In Q4, the final product will be produced and disseminated.

*PN3 Policy Roadmap*

In Q4, focus groups and a survey of child care providers will be conducted, recommendations will be developed in discussions with partners and stakeholders, and the final document will be written and submitted.

**Activity 2: Strategic Plan**

**1. Major activities and accomplishments**

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## *Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan*

During Q3, the PDG B-5 strategic planning kick off meeting was held, and presentations were given to the Illinois Early Learning Council and to the GOECD staff. At these meetings, the Morten Group surveyed participants about key elements of the strategic planning process, including how best to engage all stakeholder groups. The Morten Group also used these meetings to begin recruiting members of the Strategic Planning Council. Members of the Council will work closely with the Morten Group on the development of the updated Strategic Plan.

## *Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative*

The Home Visiting Specialist has surpassed deliverables by outreaching to 156 families and facilitating referral support for 58 families. Family friendly consent has been developed for families, which allows for their data to be released by multiple sources in order for evaluation activities to occur; a draft is complete and awaiting approval by the legal team at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The implementation of new processes to identify pregnant mother and families with children under the age of seven-months, such as outreaching to DCFS caseworkers at the start of an intact case, has resulted in positive gains: average age of primary caregiver is 28 years old (in contrast to 29 years old in 2020) and children at 11 months old (in contrast to 20 months 2020).

## *Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils*

Erikson Institute implemented a regular process to review project tasks, assignments, challenges and achievements for numerous Illinois State Advisory Councils. Erikson completed the collection of data by accessing publicly available documents for textual analysis related to mandated and non-mandated advisory councils in each of the three departments (Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Meetings were held with the Early Childhood Interagency Team (IAT), the department heads of three state agencies, and the GOECD staff.

## *Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council*

Erikson Institute implemented a regular process to review project tasks, assignments, challenges and achievements of the Illinois Early Learning Council. A review of publicly available data related to the history and current functioning of the Early Learning Council was conducted. The Erikson team attended the GOECD staff meeting, a meeting with the Morten Group (Strategic Plan), as well as several and Early Learning Council meetings.

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## *Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System*

Analysis of the ECEC Professional Development system to study and breakdown the policies, contracts, competencies, content, or coursework (with an intentional focus on ensuring racial equity in offerings), quality assurances, diversity and equitable access, and other areas as identified began this quarter. A framework is under development to analyze state and federal funding streams supporting in-service early childhood professionals across all Illinois service systems, and all relevant materials including, but not limited to, existing contracts between state agencies and PD providers, statutory language, rules, regulations, and guidance provided by state and federal agencies are being gathered. Additionally, the review, analysis, and synthetization of source documents is underway.

## *Early Childhood Transformation Team*

The Early Childhood Transformation Team recruited and hired a Statewide Director of Regional and Community Systems in partnership with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA). Job descriptions have been developed for the remaining statewide backbone staff and recruitment efforts have begun.

In collaboration with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), design for rounds three and four of the Child Care Restoration Grants have been completed, as well as the Educator Workforce Bonuses and the Build Back Better grants (to be renamed). Each component of these pandemic relief funding streams is designed to support the longer-term direction for funding redesign that was recommended by the Early Childhood Funding Commission. Three task forces have been launched to inform important aspects of a regional planning council infrastructure, including 1) Racial equity 2) Communications, and 3) Funding mechanisms to local collaborations. Each is charged to develop core recommendations for consideration by the Regional and Community Development Director and the Early Childhood Transformation Team.

## *Support Integration Projects from Commission*

Afton Partners completed a draft of a dynamic funding adequacy model and a structural design of the Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model and held several workshops on Funding System design. Support was provided for financial modeling for federal funds, including Child Care Restoration Grant Rounds Three and Four, workforce bonuses, and Build Back Better grants for child care providers.

## *Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building*

This project is creating a landscape analysis of early childhood education and care programs that are layering funding streams. The analysis will inform policy development

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and capacity-building to enable additional programs to attract and layer funding, including Head Start/Early Head Start funding. During Q3, the project consultant received data tables from IECAM (Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map), the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois Head Start Association, and began reformatting data files for consistency.

## **2. Problems**

### *Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative*

The following have created delays or challenges in the enrollment of families into home visiting services: 1) different home visiting eligibility criteria and enrollment processes; 2) changes in the workforce for both intact caseworkers and home visitors; and 3) families that are in transition, creating hesitancy to start new services. Some families discontinued utilization of home visiting services once their intact cases were closed, highlighting the need to educate intact caseworkers that home visiting is a voluntary long-term supportive program rather than a short-term intervention. Some challenges exist in collaboration and communication between home visitors and intact caseworkers, such as lack of understanding of the other system and hesitancy in discussing family risks.

### *Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System*

Due to leadership changes in the Early Learning Department in the Mayor's Office, gaining access to PD contracts has not been successful to date.

### *Support Integration Projects from Commission*

The largest challenge is data availability for the Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model (GEAM), with particular challenges for Home Visiting data and delays in Child Care Assistance Program data. Delays in data availability have led to delays in the anticipated GEAM delivery timeline and inability to complete some optional analyses and visualizations.

## **3. Significant findings and events**

### *Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative*

On September 9, 2021, the Home Visiting Specialist team provided a home visiting orientation to Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) intact supervisors statewide as a part of the Family First Prevention Services Act. On September 16, 2021, a Home Visiting – Child Welfare Program Committee met with home visiting programs,

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child welfare organizations, and administration between DCFS, Illinois Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Care, Erikson Institute, Teen Parenting Services Network, Maternal, Infant, & Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), Illinois Department of Human Services, and Start Early.

## *Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils*

Provisional findings provide a map of Illinois child- and family-serving advisory councils including their origin, legal status, membership, and functioning.

## *Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council*

An initial scan of publicly available data informed an understanding of the current restructuring and governance guidelines for the Early Learning Council and will guide the interview protocol. In addition, the racial equity activity of the committee was reviewed. Consultants attended the June 2021 ELC meeting, focused on orienting the newly appointed members.

## *Early Childhood Transformation Team*

Following input from stakeholders, a decision has been reached not to implement Regional Councils in "waves" but rather to do a full statewide launch in January 2022 for all regions at once. A project plan for the launch is currently being drafted for review with a small group of thought leaders to lead the work over the remainder of 2021.

## **4. Dissemination activities**

### *Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan*

GOECD has shared extensive background information and documentation with the Morten Group to support the strategic planning process. The Morten Group has shared an overview of the strategic planning process with multiple audiences through the three planning meetings held with various members of the early childhood development ecosystem in Illinois.

### *Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative*

Family-friendly brochures on home visiting have been developed in English and Spanish for families involved in child welfare services.

### *Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils*

Preliminary findings have been shared with key stakeholders.

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## *Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council*

An initial framework for the final report has been drafted.

## *Early Childhood Transformation Team*

Dissemination activities have primarily been PowerPoint presentations to key audiences critical to a successful governance and financing transformation for early childhood, including state agency staff, leadership in the Governor's Office, among others. The Early Childhood Transformation Team is currently working with the Communications Task Force to develop collateral materials about Regional and Community Systems for broad dissemination.

## *Support Integration Projects from Commission*

To date, work remains internal. Sharing has occurred in meetings with the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Human Services, and GOECD.

## **5. Other activities**

### *Early Childhood Transformation Team*

The Early Childhood Transformation Team welcomed a 10-month Education Pioneer Fellow who will serve as the Equity Data Analyst. Information will be used to inform the data infrastructure for regional planning councils to ensure the work across the State is grounded in high-quality data. In addition, the Governor's Office appointed the Chief Equity Officer in order to align with work across state government. The Early Childhood Transformation Team was awarded a \$1 million, 3-year grant from the New Venture Fund to support small grants to community collaborations and Regional Planning Councils to ensure robust family engagement in their decision-making work. This grant will leverage the PDG B-5 grant.

## **6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

### *Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan*

A Strategic Planning Council will be convened that represents stakeholder groups and will work closely with the Morten Group on the strategic planning process. In addition, a strategic planning retreat will initiate development of the strategic plan document.

### *Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative*

The project team will continue to: make and monitor referrals to home visiting; facilitate cross-training of child welfare and home visiting providers; refine data sharing

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policy and procedures; and survey home visiting programs again about their use of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC). Intact workers across the State will engage in the statewide Families First training, including a focus on home visiting services.

#### *Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils*

Identification of key informants/introduction for interviews will occur. Analysis and findings will be documented for the final report.

#### *Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council*

Erikson team will attend additional Early Learning Councils meeting. A protocol will be submitted for Institutional Review Board for approval. Interviewees will be identified/interviews will begin.

#### *Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System*

In Q4, work will continue to analyze the early childhood education and care professional development system to: a) study and breakdown the policies, contracts, competencies, content or coursework, quality assurances, diversity and equitable access, and other areas as identified, and b) outline and explain the various parts of the early childhood professional development system and how they relate to one another. The analysis will be shared with key stakeholders to develop and refine recommendations, and a final report will be developed outlining process, findings, and recommendations.

#### *Early Childhood Transformation Team*

In collaboration with IDHS and INCCRRA, Build Back Better grants for child care will be designed. The Early Childhood Transformation Team will consult with Afton Partners on geographic funding adequacy analysis. The preliminary design of an ECEC funding allocation formula will be completed, and the Early Childhood Transformation Team will create an estimate of the cost for state-level infrastructure (within and outside of state government) needed to sustain equitable access to high quality ECEC. The Transformation Team will prepare a report for the Governor detailing opportunities and challenges for potential new governance structures. The Transformation Team plans to hire a Policy Analyst and post announcements for additional positions at the State's backbone Regional and Community Systems office to support a successful launch of the Regional Councils in January 2022.



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## *Support Integration Projects from Funding Commission*

Afton Partners will prepare options for the Funding Design; complete the enhanced Funding Adequacy Model; complete the Federal Legislation Funding Adequacy Model; draft geographic equity and adequacy outcomes and mapping visualizations; and prepare a Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model (GEAM) findings and recommendations report.

## *Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building*

In Q4, the consultant will complete the data analysis, describe the geographic distribution of programs layering funding (the funding streams most included in layering), and other findings from the data. The consultant will report on the overall capacity of programs layering funding and the policies or supports they found helpful, in addition to identifying gaps in the data.

## **Activity 3: Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, & Engagement**

### **1. Major activities and accomplishments**

#### *Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)*

During Q3, the FAC parents held two meetings. At the June meeting, it was determined that the FAC parents would take a deeper dive into the first goal they identified for this year, which is exploring the reason for decreased enrollment in child care settings across the State of Illinois and determining ways to increase enrollment. The FAC parents worked with their region partners to enact a systems scan (within their respective region) to determine which organizations and agencies are already working to increase child care enrollment or would be willing to partner with the FAC to find solutions to the enrollment issue. The FAC parents also engaged their FAC mentors to assist with this lift. During the August meeting, the FAC parents shared the successes and barriers to their systems scan. As a result of their efforts, they were able to garner new partners for the task at hand. Additionally, the FAC accepted the motion to partner with the state's enrollment campaign initiative and serve as an advisory committee on this work. In late September, the FAC resumed their training with Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI); they participated in six hours of training on Phase 2: Community Outreach & Action.

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## *Parent Cafés*

In Q3, the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) completed the Parent Café training for the nine programs selected through an application process. The ten-hour training was completed virtually using two-hour segments over a total of five days. The training focused on building knowledge and developing competency of the Parent Café model. It also included a train the trainer component so participants can recruit and train Parent Leaders on their own. IHSA reported 100% participation at all the trainings. The Guidebook and Toolkit were completed, and copies were sent to all programs. All resources and materials have been translated into Spanish and reside in a Portal for easy access by all participants. Additionally, during this quarter the IHSA Coach has been supporting implementation of the Parent Café model within each of the nine programs. This support led to the completion of an Action Plan to help guide the work within programs. Each of the nine programs has begun to offer Parent Cafés for their community.

## *PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support*

In Q3, the major focus of this project was the launch of the Raising Illinois website on August 24, 2021 – [www.RaisingIllinois.org](http://www.RaisingIllinois.org). This major project built on work completed in partnership with marketing consultants (GMMB) in the previous quarter, where together, GMMB and Start Early identified a more accessible and compelling name for the coalition, created a set of brand standards (e.g., color palette, logo, font) and developed a set of key messages for the work. The website is a critical step in creating a visible, welcoming access point for those who want to become involved in shaping the work of Raising Illinois, including families, providers, and community members. It also provides a space where individuals can stay up to date on relevant news and resources and review the latest on the infant and toddler space in Illinois. Importantly, the website will also serve as the hub for gathering family and provider stories.

Contracted activities during Q3 for GMMB included work to act as a thought-partner to the Start Early team on the overall content strategy for the website, develop several pages of substantive content for the website, and review all key pages-once developed pre-launch. The web development contractor, Briteweb, played a key role in researching websites of similar/like organization and developing a recommended content strategy and art direction for the website. Throughout this process, Start Early prioritized the end-user's experience (e.g., a parent) and an authentic design for the site. Briteweb led the actual website development process, which included quality assurance, staff training, and testing. Briteweb continues to provide ongoing support and maintenance following the launch.

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## **2. Problems**

### *Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)*

Regarding the systems scan, the FAC parents articulated the great difficulty they encountered introducing themselves to agencies and organizations; the legitimacy of the FAC came into question because members do not have professional email addresses. The FAC requested that the Early Learning Council (ELC) or the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) consider rectifying this matter by providing a professional email under the State of Illinois. Neither the ELC nor GOECD were able to accommodate this request. The backbone agency, Illinois Action for Children will review this matter to determine if their organization would be able to accommodate the FAC by establishing a professional email address for the FAC members.

Additionally, the FAC parents are strong advocates for language equity; they are committed to ensuring Spanish interpretation is available for every FAC meeting. Illinois Action for Children has struggled to find a Spanish Interpreter to provide interpretation services during FAC meetings. Finally, in early August, one of the Region Four FAC parents shared that she would need to vacate her post because her family was moving from Illinois to Iowa. The FAC posted the vacancy to identify a new parent representative from Region Four.

### *Parent Cafés*

The pandemic is still causing challenges as programs are not able to host in-person Cafés. Also, during this quarter the COVID-19 exposure rates increased for both staff and children; this uncertainty makes it hard to fully operationalize the Parent Cafés. In addition, a majority of the nine programs are understaffed and challenged with finding staff. Many current staff are managing multiple roles, leaving minimal time to implement the Parent Cafés.

### *PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support*

Plans for a "back-to-school" themed public launch has been delayed due: 1) a delay in determining the role of the executive branch in this type of a launch; and 2) given the rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant, the marketing consultants recommended it was best not to tie this kind of aspirational launch to what became a complicated return to school environment. Discussions are still underway with the executive branch to determine the best time to reconvene current coalition members and other interested individuals more formally in a public-facing event.

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### **3. Significant findings and events**

#### *Parent Cafés*

The Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) developed all electronic reporting measures, which seems to be more efficient. All Parent Participant Evaluations and Parent Leader Evaluations are now submitted electronically, which makes it easier for the Coach to track and support programs in real time.

#### *PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support*

As of September 29, 2021, the Raising Illinois website has been visited by 720 unique users, with a total of 1,013 sessions on the website. As expected, the home page has been visited the most, closely followed by the "Our Members" and "Stories" pages. Excitedly, the website has been visited by individuals in 31 states, with most visits by those in Illinois. In Illinois, Start Early has seen web traffic from individuals across the State, with the most visits from individuals in the Chicagoland, Springfield, Rockford, and Quad City areas. Since the website's launch, Start Early has also received get involved/email sign-up responses from 25 new individuals.

### **4. Dissemination activities**

#### *Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)*

GOECD highlighted the FAC's initial meeting in a monthly newsletter disseminated to approximately 7,000 Illinoisans, as well as in the Governor's Office internal newsletter distributed to staff.

#### *Parent Cafés*

Training materials, such as the agenda and PowerPoint, as well as the Guidebook, Toolkit, and all supporting materials were disseminated. The Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) also secured an online Portal, so all materials are easily accessible.

#### *PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support*

Two major external announcements were made during Q3: 1) announcing a new name, Raising Illinois, for the coalition; and 2) announcing the launch of the new Raising Illinois website. For both announcements, an email was sent to the Raising Illinois email list (approximately 310 individuals), and information was posted on the coalition's collaborative Basecamp platform, where Start Early encouraged coalition members to disseminate the news to their personal and professional networks.

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In addition, for the website launch, Start Early developed a robust communications toolkit for coalition members to utilize for consistent and wider dissemination. This toolkit included sample language for email and/or newsletters, as well as social media posts and topic-specific graphics. To date, use of the social toolkit has garnered 220+ clicks of the Raising Illinois website. At Start Early, website launch communications were shared via the Illinois Policy Team's email list and Twitter account, Start Early's eNews newsletter and Twitter account, and via Start Early's weekly internal staff announcements.

## **5. Other activities – N/A**

## **6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

### *Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)*

The planned activities for Q4 include: finalizing the budget for FY22; conducting the third and final rotation of COFI training (Phase 3); and FAC member participation in the Statewide Family Needs Assessment (Project B).

### *Parent Cafés*

In Q3, the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) will: focus on continued support for each of the nine programs to implement Parent Cafés within their communities; develop a tool or guide (including questions that drive responsive feedback from parents) so individual programs can develop their own topics and implement the Cafés on a variety of topics into the future; and complete the overall evaluation report that captures individual parent and Parent Leader feedback and informs both local and State system development.

### *PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support*

In Q4, Start Early plans to: launch the "storytelling" strategy; host a public "launch" event; and create a robust and interactive storytelling section of the new Raising Illinois website.

## **Activity 4: Sharing Best Practices & Professional Development for the Workforce**

### **1. Major activities and accomplishments**

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## *Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)*

Part two of the Supervisor FAN Cohort was held on July 15, 2021. Curriculum for Part two included continuing the concepts of the FAN and attunement with special focus on Collaborative Exploration, Capacity Building, Integration, Self-compassion, and preparing to embed the FAN in sustainable practice. FAN Trainer Candidates from Head Start facilitated three, 3-hour virtual sessions of FAN Training with FAN Master Trainer's support, observation, and feedback on July 12, 13, and 14, 2021. Thirteen home visitors and one supervisor completed the Level I FAN Training. The supervisor is now receiving six months of mentoring from FAN Trainer Candidate, while the FAN Trainer Candidates receive mentoring from Erikson Institute's lead trainer.

## *Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development*

In Q3, in partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) began supporting six Spanish speaking Family Child Care programs. One of the child care sites participating in the Pyramid Model through the QRIS Pilot (Activity Five) ended their involvement in implementation, citing staffing issues as the main factor for discontinuing. Implementation programs have been provided access to the following trainings: Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) (Aug 3-4), TPOT (Aug 24-26), Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddlers Observation Scale (Sept 9-10), and Trauma Informed Care-Training of Trainer (Sept 28). The Process Coaches embedded in the CCR&Rs continue to be supported in this new role through trainings, monthly check-in meetings, and additional one-on-one support from a long-time Process Coach.

## *Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches*

In Q3, local delivery of Pyramid Model trainings continues to be submitted and scheduled through Gateways; registry-approved trainings and professional development trainings offered by PMC are entered into the Gateways system for ongoing tracking. New Family Child Care implementation sites have begun to build their Leadership Teams and are collecting baseline Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality data points. Process coach logs are also being collected on work within the child care programs. For the evaluation, instrument development and data collection has continued as planned. Newly implementing Child Care sites have been added to all data collection tools, and Process Coaches have received training.

## *Inclusion Professional Development System*

In August and September, 50 providers met for a cross-system professional development Community of Practice (COP). One topic that continued to surface in the

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CoP has been the need to support families in finding inclusive child care; in response, a "live binder" was created to gather the resources across the State. Intensive professional learning and technical assistance with three QRIS Pilot child care centers continues. Summer posed additional barriers to connecting with the sites due to vacations and illnesses on the part of each child care location. Some efforts included connecting with local school districts to build relationships and trainings on Understanding Inclusion. The three Community Inclusion Teams (CIT) in Mannheim, Collinsville, and Springfield continue to meet monthly, and inclusion specialists have met with the CIT leads bi-monthly to plan for the CIT meetings. Pivotal Practices training for classroom implementors was held August 9-12, 2021, for three hours each session. The presentations were led by University of Denver Positive Early Learning Experiences Center and focused on inclusive practices to support learners in the preschool classroom. Practice Based Coaching began on September 17, 2021 and continues in October for site coaches to learn how to coach using inclusive practices in the classroom. The three communities will meet as CIT's monthly to continue planning and scaling up as they do.

### *Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

The final report, *A Descriptive Profile of Illinois' Home Visiting Workforce*, was completed and provides aligned and accurate data on the home visiting workforce registry.

### *Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization*

The implementation of previously designed competency modules is underway at all institutions for the fall semester. Institutions who are piloting the coursework during this quarter and administering the surveys include: Heartland Community College, Northern Illinois University, National Louis University, Illinois State University, and Moraine Valley Community College. Preliminary spring/summer survey results were shared by the Competency-Based Education Network consultant at the leadership meeting in September. Data from both learners and faculty members were shared. Tracking systems are being utilized to ensure there are sufficient students/learners taking each module to inform survey results and findings.

### *Gateways: Linkage Project*

In Q3, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) engaged Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) representatives in scheduling a meeting with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) representatives to discuss data linkages and sharing. The ISBE team is taking the lead on setting a meeting.

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## *Gateways: Credential Fees*

Information that the Gateways Credential Renewal fee is being waived continues to be shared via social media, Registry newsletters, Child Care Resource & Referral agency directors, as well as on the Gateways website. Individuals who had not yet renewed their Gateways Credential in 2021 were identified. Even with the continuous promotion of credential renewal fee waivers, individuals were not applying on their own. In mid-September, data from current Gateways Registry members with credentials expiring December 31, 2021, were contacted individually using two full-time temp employees. The temp employees have been able to dramatically increase the number of renewal waivers in just two short weeks. In total, 2,791 renewal waivers (47%) have been expended to date. With recent adjustments and continued use of the temp employees to support individuals in the field who need to renew their credentials, this funding is now on target to be fully expended by December 30, 2021.

## *Gateways: Education Reimbursement*

The Education Reimbursement Initiative has received 125 applications during this reporting period. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has obligated \$56,961 dollars or 71% of the total grant funding to date. The funding has been obligated to eligible providers who seek assistance with outstanding student debt or reimbursement for payments made to accredited Illinois colleges and universities. Of the \$166,250 budget, \$85,000 has been reallocated to support other PDG B-5 initiatives administered by INCCRRA.

## *Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion*

During Q3, the execution of Year Two amendments with institutional grantees was completed, reflecting the additional \$1M allocated to the EC4 project, and bringing the overall Year Two project total to \$2.275M. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) also hosted a virtual meeting for all Year One grantees to share highlights of their work and lessons learned with one another. In addition to having grantees present on the outcomes of their Year One cohorts and related strategies, IBHE staff shared findings from the end-of-Year One survey across all cohorts. Finally, IBHE continued regularly scheduled check-in conversations with EC4 program leaders at each institution, scheduled in late September/early October. IBHE also issued the fall 2021 survey for institutions to send to Year Two candidates in an effort to secure fall 2021 findings from this cohort.



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## *Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules*

Faculty participating in the Gateways Infant Toddler Credential modularization project have been divided into two groups. Each group has been given the content areas for which they are responsible for writing modules. Each group is going through multiple rounds of writing curriculum for competencies within their area of expertise and designated content area and are also participating in the review and provision of feedback of the modules designed by colleagues. Faculty are incorporating the scope and sequence charts for each specific competency content area.

## *Gateways Scholarship Program*

All funding for this project has been allocated to eligible recipients. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) is currently awaiting invoices to be provided by the corresponding institutions of higher education to pay out all funds on behalf of the recipients. The written report with the number of eligible applicants and total budget amount obligated will be shared with GOECD by December 30, 2021.

## *ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program*

National Louis University (NLU) recruited over 50 students for the ECE Competency Pilot. During this period, those students have enrolled and begun courses. Invoicing for the project has taken place. Students are well into the competency-based coursework and have successfully completed the first round of coursework/competencies. The invoices were generated for students prior to the start of summer and fall terms.

## *Family Specialist Credential Modules*

Gateways Family Specialist Credential entitlement applications from higher education institutions who want to become entitled for Gateways Credentials were due October 1, 2021. As of October 1, 2021, five of the six higher education institutions have submitted their initial entitlement application to the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) office, and one is still in development. The Entitled Review Group will meet on September 21st, October 19th, and November 16th. A potential fourth late October 2021 or early December 2021 meeting may be scheduled if needed. INCCRRA staff continue to support faculty in their institution becoming entitled for the Family Specialist Credential.

## *ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway*

All contracts with participating institutions and state and national consultants have been submitted and signed as of this reporting period. Virtual meetings on bridge design in partnership with faculty and relevant state agency representation continue to be held.

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Consultants have developed a crosswalk of Gateways ECE Credential Level 5 competencies with Illinois Professional Educator Competencies (IPEC) and shared them with faculty to gain input on findings.

## *Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning*

State and national consultants are working with two- and four-year faculty to create a series of scenarios in relationship to the Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential Level 2 that can be used by Mursion to develop the virtual environments. In Q3, all contracted faculty have been divided into five work groups, one per competency area of the ECE Credential Level 2. Each group has submitted environmental design descriptions for the simulation avatars. Each content area had at least three scenarios that were put forward by faculty. Each group drafted simulation exercises/scenarios and attended workgroup meetings with Dr. Tiffany Freeze of Competency-Based Education Network to revise their scenarios.

## *Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families*

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) contracted with the Irving Harris Foundation in July 2021 to present two Diversity-Informed Tenets and Technical Assistance Workshops to support planning an approach for the integration of the Tenets. Workshops were scheduled for August 9-10 and November 9-10, 2021. Additionally, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Planning Group was established and is being led by Dr. Eva Shivers from the Indigo Cultural Center. Dr. Shivers is providing technical assistance and has collaborated with the working group to develop a workplan with recommendations for Reflective Groups/Communities of Practice. The first meeting was held on September 10, 2021. Five meetings with cross-systems stakeholders will occur through December 2021.

## **2. Problems**

### *Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development*

One child care center decided to end their involvement with the Pyramid Model pilot given their lack of a full-time director and other staffing issues.

### *Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches*

Submission of trainings outside the local Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies for local training delivery of Pyramid Model training modules continues to be inconsistent. There are also challenges with integrating data of Illinois participants who have completed the self-paced online training modules for Gateways Registry credit. Both

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challenges are agenda items on bi-weekly cross-sector Pyramid Model meetings to work towards resolution. Additionally, staffing issues due to the pandemic continue to affect child care programs resulting in longer timeframes to establish leadership teams, complete trainings, and fully participate in the pilot in order to collect data. There continues to be no on-site training and coaching due to COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

## *Inclusion Professional Development System*

Lack of response over the summer from the child care providers meant fewer connections and opportunities with the QRIS Pilot sites. Additionally, one center was sold, so efforts had to restart with that site. There seems to be increased issues with site visits due to spikes in COVID-19 cases. Early CHOICES went back to virtual visits; hybrid meetings with some child care staff in-person and some child care staff virtually poses a technical challenge that hinders participation from all parties.

## *Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

While there were no significant problems, there was a delay in finalizing the report; the project was completed in September.

## *Gateways: Linkage Project*

Due to different state agency rules and protocols, the data sharing conversations are moving slowly.

## *Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion*

Four grantees underspent Year One funds. Work is underway to return these monies to the Illinois State Board of Education. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) will be heightening their capacity to monitor this aspect of the work in Year Two.

## *Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families*

There was difficulty filing registration for the August 9-10 Diversity-Informed Tenets Workshops. Registration was opened to Pyramid Model Master Cadre Members, which helped to fill the event.

### **3. Significant findings and events**

#### *Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)*

A summary of feedback for the Supervisor FAN cohort (both parts one and two) was positive, with participants expressing the training increased their reflective skills and

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they learned skills to listen for understanding and explore with the supervisee. Many expressed how helpful it was to learn from and share with their colleagues. A summary of feedback for the Train the Trainer Cohort One for Head Start/Early Head Start practitioners was positive, with participants expressing they gained skills in self-reflection, self-regulation, collaboration and capacity building with families, and mindfulness. Overall, it was expressed that the techniques gained in the training would support building stronger relationships with families.

### *Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development*

At the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Trainings held August 3-4 and August 24-26, 100% of participants reported meeting the objectives of the training, including becoming reliable on the TPOT. One hundred percent of respondents indicated the training positively impacted their students' social emotional growth. At the Teaching Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) Training on September 9-10, 100% of participants reported meeting the objectives of training, including becoming reliable on the TPITOS. One hundred percent of respondents indicated the training positively impacted their students' social emotional growth. At the TIC TOT (Sept 28), 100% of respondents agreed they understood the key principles and objectives in the training. Almost 60% of the respondents indicated they could deliver the TIC modules.

### *Inclusion Professional Development System*

The Community of Practice group has established a method for sharing agendas, PowerPoints, and resources that has proven useful as they build out resources to support families in accessing and approaching child care providers for their children with disabilities. The three Community Inclusion Teams (CITs) have increased inclusive opportunities with the start of the new school year. The communities have learned about the importance of inclusive practices and have plans to increase use of specific strategies to improve access participation and supports for young children with disabilities.

### *Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

The report identifies 1,019 individuals in Illinois who meet the intended definition of home visitor and supervisor. Of this group, 51.8% utilize Parents as Teachers, 19.8% use Baby TALK, 17.2% Healthy Families America, 9.8% Early Head Start Home-Based, and 1.4% use the Nurse Family Partnership home visiting model. In terms of racial demographics, 46.8% identified as Caucasian/White, 30.5% as Hispanic/Latinx, 20.4% as African American/Black, 0.9% as Asian, 0.9% as Multi-Racial, and 0.5% as other.

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## *Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization*

Ongoing monthly virtual meetings are being held with piloting faculty. The leadership team also met monthly. Meetings have been scheduled regularly through December 2021, which is when the pilot will conclude.

## *Gateways: Credential Fees*

Two full-time temporary employees have been employed to assist in connecting with those who need to renew credentials. They have been successful at increasing the use of renewal waivers exponentially.

## *Gateways: Education Reimbursements*

Previously funded applicants that are still gaining debt at accredited Illinois Higher Education Institutions seem to be a more responsive group than the new applicants. These applicants are still pursuing coursework and show that this support is needed to help them continue their educational goals.

## *Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort (EC4) Expansion*

All grantees have successfully recruited participants in Year Two cohorts. Demographic and other information will be available in Q4.

## *Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules*

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) selected infant toddler expert faculty from selected Illinois Higher Education Institutions. Faculty have met regularly as partners in the groups, along with the state and national consultants, to strengthen their drafts of curriculum modules. The leadership team has also reviewed the feedback from the review rounds of each of the content areas as curriculum is designed. The leadership team consisting of INCCRRA staff, state and national consultants, and mentors are meeting monthly to review the work and to make sure the project continues to meet grant deliverables and the timeline.

## *ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program*

One of the significant findings in Q3 was that some students needed more time to complete their modules, which was possible as we extended the final due date for grades. This shift did not affect the goal to invoice the project prior to the start of the fall term.

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## *ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway*

The crosswalk of the Gateways ECE Credential competencies with the Illinois Professional Educator Competencies shows a high degree of alignment.

## *Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning*

Each competency area work group is meeting multiple times with state consultants to write scenarios for their competency area, which will be used to create the virtual environments. The Prior Learning Assessment Leadership Team met on July 1, August 11, August 26, and September 14, 2021. All faculty involved in the project attended a kick-off/touch base on July 12 and a touch base on August 30, 2021.

## **4. Dissemination activities**

### *Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development*

The Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) continues to disseminate the model and supporting materials to the child care programs via the ePyramid modules.

### *Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches*

Formative data were shared in Q3 including summaries of feedback from PD events and from Process Coach logs. Ongoing dissemination of data in the Year One report will occur through the development of more infographics or one to three-page briefs that are targeted at both broad and more targeted audiences.

### *Inclusion Professional Development System*

Community Inclusion Team public awareness materials are continually shared. The Community of Practice is an additional avenue for sharing new information and resources with each other and with the programs each member touches. Presentations are planned for upcoming conferences in Illinois, including Sharing A Vision and Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education.

### *Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

The report was distributed and presented to the Illinois Early Learning Council's Home Visiting Task Force Committee on September 23, 2021 and is hosted as a final deliverable on the PDG B-5 page on the GOECD website.

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## *Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization*

An update on the project was provided to the Professional Development Advisory Council Steering Committee (PDAC) on August 4 and at the full PDAC meeting on September 1, 2021.

## *Gateways: Credential Fees*

The Gateways website was used to publicly announce the \$65 Gateways Credential Renewal fee waiver. As noted above, social media and a variety of newsletters shared the credential fee renewal waiver announcement statewide to reach as many members of the workforce as possible. Direct emails and phone calls to individuals who need to renew Gateways Credentials were also utilized as outreach mechanisms.

## *Gateways: Education Reimbursements*

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has sent email blasts to numerous early childhood stakeholders during this reporting period. The purpose of the email blasts was to inform the stakeholders of the Education Reimbursement Initiative. Additionally, an advertisement was posted on Facebook to raise awareness about the reimbursement program. The project leads are also working on an informational video regarding the Education Reimbursement Initiative that will be shared with stakeholders.

## *Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion*

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) will complete a Year One summative report in October 2021 and work in partnership with GOECD to disseminate it. National Louis University, one of the grantees, created a video highlighting the voices of participants in their cohort program – all candidates holding the Gateways Level 5 credential and seeking a master's degree with Illinois State Board of Education Professional Educator Licensure.

## *Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules*

The Professional Development Advisory Council Steering Committee (PDAC) received an update on the project on August 4, 2021, and the full PDAC received an update on September 1, 2021.

## *Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning*

Email announcements were sent to all ECE entitled higher education provosts, vice-presidents, deans, and faculty inviting them to the December 7, 2021 showcase of the Prior Learning Assessment project. A presentation on the Prior Learning Assessment

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project was shared at the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) Steering meeting that was held in August, as well as the full membership PDAC meeting in September.

## *Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families*

Training and registration information on the two Diversity-Informed Tenets workshops was sent to the targeted audiences for the August and November training dates.

## **5. Other activities**

### *Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)*

While the PDG B-5 grant does not explicitly fund Erikson Institute's Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, this project will continue to be informed and improved by Erikson's FAN Team DEI initiatives.

### *Inclusion Professional Development System*

Early CHOICES invited Community of Practice (CoP) members and others to join their professional development events hosted outside of PDG B-5 specific work. They have had a good response with Head Start and child care specialists joining their book study on *Brave Leadership*, the family series *Understanding Inclusion*, and the trainings on *Outstanding Practices in Inclusion* from Community Based Organizations. Early CHOICES is also teaming up with the Early Intervention Training Program to host a series of three webinars on *Inclusion for Young Children & Their Families* and accessing the *Understanding Inclusion* online modules in October and November.

### *Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

The report continues to be distributed to different groups and avenues.

### *Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches*

Materials and support continue to be developed in Spanish to support Spanish-speaking teachers, coaches, children, and families.

### *Gateways: Education Reimbursement*

Results from the follow-up survey taken by recipients of the 2020 reimbursement program were analyzed and formatted into a one-page data flyer.



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**6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

*Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)*

In Q4, the cohort of Supervisor FAN training (Supervisor/ Practitioner) will continue for the twenty supervisors; a Train-the-Trainer for Practitioner FAN will be continue to expand Head Start's capacity to provide FAN training to front-line staff of programs after the grant (trainer team of two); and Community of Practice Meetings targeting Head Start/Early Head Start Programs will continue.

*Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development*

In Q4, Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) will: continue dissemination of eModule codes, continue virtual live training events, continue monthly Process Coach calls for child care sites, and continue Process Coach support for CCR&R agencies.

*Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches*

In Q4, INCCRRA will: maintain the database of Registry-Approved Pyramid Model trainings; continue support and administration of Relationship Based Professional Development within child care programs; continue evaluation data analysis and reporting; and continue evaluation of Pyramid Model Implementation Sites and Pyramid Model Consortium professional development events.

*Inclusion Professional Development System*

In Q4, Early CHOICES will: continue Community of Practice (CoP) meetings; continue monthly meetings with ExceleRate Pilot sites; set up a training/meeting for three pilot child care centers to meet together to learn about MOUs and referral expectations; and support Practiced Based Coaching Training for three communities.

*Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement*

While the report is completed and finalized, Q4 will include detailed information on the different avenues through which the report was disseminated.

*Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization*

During Q4, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) will coordinate meetings with evaluators, consultants, faculty partners and state agency representatives to finalize project implementation and ensure all deliverables are met. In addition, data metrics and other analytics will be reviewed.

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## *Gateways: Linkage Project*

In Q4, INCCRRA will continue to explore options to increase the number of school-based Preschool for All professionals (teachers and paraprofessionals) in the Gateways Registry.

## *Gateways: Credential Fees*

Messaging for the credential application fee waiver will continue to be disseminated via multiple information sharing platforms. INCCRRA will collect a range of workforce demographic and credential attainment data for aggregate reporting purposes.

## *Gateways: Education Reimbursements*

INCCRRA plans to set aside funding for previously funded applicants, if eligible. INCCRRA will continue to check-in with GOECD on this item to ensure spending in this area remains modest, as the priority for this year's funding is new applicants to the program. After final review the informational video will be posted on the INCCRRA website and distributed for awareness.

## *Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion*

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) will continue to work with grantees during Year Two. Year Two funds will be dispersed in installments per the terms of the amended agreements with institutions. IBHE will continue quarterly calls with recipient institutions.

## *Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules*

Faculty Fellows will be invited to review and provide input into module design. Infant Toddler Credential Competency Module drafts will move through multiple review cycles with revisions incorporated until the finalized/refined report is completed.

## *Gateways Scholarship Program*

INCCRRA will process all invoices from the corresponding institutions of higher education to pay out all funds on behalf of the recipients, once received.

## *ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program*

National Louis University (NLU) will continue to support participating students with the goal of the students persisting through the program.

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## *Family Specialist Credential Modules*

INCCRRA will support the higher education institutions to align their programs to become entitled for the Gateways to Opportunity Family Specialist Credential. INCCRRA will also accept and process entitlement applications and submit entitlement applications to the Entitled Review Group.

## *ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway*

National consultants are in the process of creating competency modules for the newly created bridge competencies from the ECE Level 5 to the PEL.

## *Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning*

Consultants will facilitate a series of meetings convened by INCCRRA with the contracted higher education institutions to build knowledge of Prior Learning Assessment and review Early Childhood Education Credential Competencies. The group will continue to develop scenarios and the virtual assessment for all the Gateways ECE Credential Level 2 competencies.

## *Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families*

In Q4, the delivery of the second Diversity-Informed Tenets Workshop and Technical Assistance to support planning an approach for the integration of the Tenets will occur. Additionally, the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Planning Group meetings are scheduled for October 1, October 22, November 12, and December 3, 2021; a workplan with recommendations of the approach for Reflective Groups/Communities of Practice by Dr. Shivers and Tenets Facilitator(s) will be completed.

## **Activity 5: Improving Quality/Service Integration, Expanding Access**

### **1. Major activities and accomplishments**

#### *ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot*

During Q3, the 35 participating child care centers began using the revised funding model, developed with their feedback. As a result, they are submitting simplified monthly billings reflecting the funds they are earning to support the staffing structure required by ExceleRate Pilot Bronze-level standards. Feedback has been universally positive, and GOECD believes the model is now sustainable and scalable. GOECD has reintroduced the requirement for monthly Plan-Do-Review meetings, and the

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McCormick Center is incorporating support in its consultation with directors. Many centers have commented that the staff team meetings are improving the work environment and overall quality of the program.

## *ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot*

In Q3, the three participating Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies engaged in planning with local peer-led family child care associations to discuss how the associations might enhance their support for providers to engage in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). Joint action plans were developed with four associations. The activities are intended to inform the revision of Quality Rating & Improvement System standards for CQI.

## *ExceleRate Pilot: Online Payroll Reporting System*

During Q3, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) identified the business requirements and system design needed to support the use of the Gateways Director Portal for reporting payroll information to facilitate rate payments in the revised funding model. INCCRRA began the technical work to incorporate the enhancements in it the online system.

## *Community Planning for Expansion*

In Q3, workshops and facilitated planning continued in Elgin (the initial "test" community) and in the Cohort One communities. Data on the mismatch between community needs and available supply of early childhood education and care programs was shared with Cohort Two communities. Coalition building continued, and initial capacity-building planning began.

## **2. Problems**

### *ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot*

During Q3, the child care centers continued to experience the impact of COVID-19 on both enrollment and staffing. However, the centers have all kept pace with project activities.

### *Community Planning for Expansion*

In Q3, some COVID-19 related challenges remained, but most schools and child care centers reopened, and their staff members are able to participate in the planning coalitions.

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### **3. Significant findings and events**

#### *ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot*

The revised funding model has been successful. In addition, very preliminary feedback suggests that the Continuous Quality Improvement requirement for regular center team Plan-Do-Review meetings could make a significant difference in program quality. GOECD employed an ExceleRate Pilot Support Specialist to help collect and analyze data and support directors with financial reporting.

#### *ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot*

The peer-led family child care associations expressed strong interest in closer ties and increased support from their CCR&R agencies.

### **4. Dissemination activities**

#### *ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot*

GOECD met with the state's Early Childhood Transformation Team to explain the Pilot funding model and discuss how it could be incorporated in a new statewide funding system. GOECD also shared details of the model with Simon Workman on behalf of a national foundation and met with an Illinois Prenatal to Three (PN3) implementation committee to discuss the model and its benefits for infant and toddler classrooms. Finally, GOECD met with the Illinois Department of Human Services to discuss planning for continuation of funding support as PDG B-5 funds are phased out.

#### *Community Planning for Expansion*

Illinois Action for Children staff members have met with the state Transition Team to discuss how these activities could be integrated into a new statewide system of supports for community systems building.

### **5. Other activities – N/A**

### **6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

#### *ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot*

Activities for Q4 include focus on, and support for, Plan-Do-Review center team meetings, continued collection and analysis of data for evaluation, and further discussions with the Illinois Department of Human Services on project continuation beyond PDG B-5.

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## *ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot*

In Q4, CCR&R agencies and family child care associations will begin to implement the new local plans for resource sharing and capacity-building.

## *ExceleRate Pilot: Online Payroll Reporting System*

During Q4, INCCRRA will complete building enhancements for payroll reporting through the Gateways Registry Director Portal and test them.

## *Community Planning for Expansion*

In Q4, the Lake County planning group, now in Cohort Two, will divide into several more local groups. The East Aurora group, which started in Cohort Two and ceased operation temporarily, will be reactivated and integrated into Cohort Three. Workshop and planning activities will continue in all communities.

## **Activity 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, & Data Use for Continuous Improvement**

### **1. Major activities and accomplishments**

#### *Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality*

The grant to the University of Illinois' Center for Prevention, Research, and Development (CPRD) was executed with a start date of July 1, 2021. Since that time, CPRD has posted the position, interviewed candidates, and made an offer for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Service's Healthy Families Illinois (HFI) Research Data Specialist. The selected candidate accepted the offer and started on September 27, 2021. CPRD's lead MIECHV Research Specialist will be training the new employee on the data system. In October, the HFI Research Data Specialist will be introduced to HFI program staff.

#### *Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk*

During Q3, the NIU team supported: execution of the restated and amended inter-governmental agreement (IGA) for ILDS 2.0; ongoing discussions around finalizing language for the Data Access and Use Agreement (DAUA), enabling creation of the Early Childhood Participation Dataset (Dataset) using child-level records from selected Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois State Board of Education-administered programs; ongoing discussions around finalizing language for the DAUA, enabling data collection from Illinois Head Start Association-affiliated Head Start and Early Head Start grantees; and drafting of a set of procedures describing the process

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for requesting data from the ILDS 2.0 Cloud Pak for Data environment, which will house the Dataset.

## *Data Accessibility & Literacy*

The Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) staff have been working with a vendor, Pixo, to complete the new user interface for the data integration work. Staff are currently moving content/pages from the current site to the new site. IECAM expects that work to be completed in Q4. In addition, staff have been working with GOECD to develop a workplan for the CloudPak back-end connection (Part 1), data stewarding (Part 2), and data warehouse/dashboards (Part 3). IECAM anticipates submitting that workplan in mid-October. Similarly, staff have been preparing for the IBM Workshops (scheduled for early October). The Project Director has been participating in the Early Childhood Participation Database conversations, in addition to conversations related to the City of Chicago Data Integration project.

## *Licensing Process Modernization*

The work with the consulting firm (Envoy) that specializes in the Zendesk help desk software used by the Gateways Registry is complete. The goal of this work was to ensure the software is set up to provide an efficient platform that will allow for Day Care Licensing Representatives (DCLRs) to receive priority support as they increase the ways in how they interact with the Gateways Registry. Through this work, INCCRRA was able to review and improve the ticket workflow as well as establish Service-Level Agreement (SLA) priorities and timelines for anything that would be submitted by a DCLR.

## *Attainment & Achievement Data*

Major activities for this period involve supporting the construction of the technical architecture that will support the Attainment & Achievement database in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT). Accomplishments include: successful configuration of CloudPak for Windows and connection to Northern Illinois University's (NIU's) data storage repository in Microsoft Azure; initial transfer of data from the Illinois State Board of Education for early childhood records, including KIDS assessment data, into NIU's data storage repository; development of a draft multi-agency data model for the NIU data storage repository; and participation in DoIT sponsored trainings and workshops with IBM for staff orientation on IBM's CloudPak software.

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## *Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality*

During Q3, major activities related to this grant included creation of users for GOECD, Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Northern Illinois University (NIU), and Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), and an assessment of the feasibility of a data request working group process within the IBM Cloud Pak for Data (CP4D). NIU prepared, developed, and contracted for IBM workshop to kick off the Early Childhood Participation Dataset project that will occur in the fourth quarter. The data connection between NIU and DoIT has been tested, and a final review of the Data Access and Use Agreement between IDHS, ISBE, and GOECD has been completed. Finally, staff reviewed and evaluated the draft report from the Governor's Office on Public Act 101-0654, the Data Governance and Organization to Support Equity and Racial Justice.

## **2. Problems**

### *Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality*

The work of this project has just begun, since the contract with the University of Illinois' Center for Prevention, Research, and Development (CPRD) did not start until July 1, 2021, and the Research Data Specialist was hired in late September. Once the new staff member is trained and oriented to the data system, the shift will be made to start focusing on project deliverables.

### *Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk*

The Data Access and Use Agreement (DAUA) for the Dataset and for the Head Start data collection have yet to be finalized and executed. These delays relate to extensive iteration on legal and technical language in the agreements.

### *Licensing Process Modernization*

There has been some delay in obtaining an overview of the tablet-based monitoring software used by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). To streamline the process for Day Care Licensing Representatives (DCLRs), an overview was requested to determine if the Gateways Registry could feed into the system. INCCRRA also reached out directly to the company that provides the DCFS software but has not received a response. Therefore, the budget set aside to work with this company to look at designing a connector between their software and the Gateways Registry may not be spent fully.



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## *Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality*

Data sharing agreements require multiple layers of review and time to process. Discussions continue regarding an agreement for linking data between ISBE and GOECD, and regarding the automation of the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA) key process for IDHS. Challenges include integrating data from multiple sources and multiple agencies. Support continues to build for data governance within and among the agencies with progress made during Q3, adding clarification to the scope of work to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of various users.

### **3. Significant findings and events**

#### *Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk*

The NIU team supported execution of the restated and amended IGA for the ILDS 2.0.

#### *Attainment & Achievement Data*

The most significant event during this period was the successful test of the connection between the IBM CloudPak software and the NIU cloud-based data repository, which allows for formal connection of Illinois State Board of Education data into the system in the next stage of the work plan.

## *Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality*

In addition to the connection made with the Illinois Department of Human Services databases through the Illinois Longitudinal Data System Early Childhood Participation Data Project with IBM CP4D, the data connection between NIU and DoIT has been tested. In June 2021, OKTA was integrated in to CP4D, the State's latest single sign on, multifactor authentication identity management system. Plans are underway to enable internal and external users to access CP4D that manage early childhood data sets.

### **4. Dissemination activities**

#### *Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk*

The NIU team disseminated to all signatories the fully executed version of the restated and amended IGA for ILDS 2.0.

#### *Attainment & Achievement Data*

Information regarding progress on this project is reported regularly to a multi-agency committee coordinating progress on development of the Illinois Longitudinal Data

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System (ILDS) and related projects. The Attainment and Achievement Data project ultimately will be made available statewide through the ILDS.

## *Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality*

Bi-weekly discussions between GOECD, DoIT, Governor's Office, and ISBE have continued in order to develop the project. Additional collaborators in the project have been added to the discussions, including IDHS, IECAM, and Head Start.

## **5. Other activities – N/A**

## **6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

### *Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality*

In Q4, the following deliverables will be completed: work with DataKeeper to ensure the Healthy Families Illinois (HFI) program accounts are set up in Visit Tracker in a way that aligns with MIECHV; train and support IDHS HFI staff in learning the Visit Tracker system so it can be used for monitoring and quality assurance; and provide technical assistance, support, and training to HFI programs through regular calls with HFI program staff, development and dissemination of training material, and troubleshooting.

### *Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk*

In Q4, NIU will: finalize and execute the DAUA for the Early Childhood Participation Dataset; draft and submit for governance approval a set of policies (and associated procedures) describing the data request process for ILDS 2.0; and finalize and execute the DAUA for Head Start data collection.

### *Data Accessibility & Literacy*

In Q4, University of Illinois will: host IBM workshops; submit an updated workplan and budget/narrative; and prepare for GOECD a presentation of the new user interface/framework for integrated data process.

### *Licensing Process Modernization*

In Q4, INCCRRA will: gather input from center directors and family child care providers on how they could use the Gateways Registry to prepare for licensing visits and maintain compliance with paperwork requirements; identify the business requirements and system design needed to support modernization of DCFS Licensing utilization of the Gateways Registry; develop Phase One enhancements to the Gateways Registry Director Portal for directors and Family Child Care provider functionality; develop Phase

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One enhancements to the Gateways Registry DCLR Portal to facilitate validation of center staff and Family Child Care provider qualifications; develop Phase One enhancements to the DCLR tablets to align with modernization efforts; and update the data warehouse with added fields and processes.

## *Attainment & Achievement Data*

In Q4, NIU will: complete the initial connection of ISBE early childhood data set into CloudPak, and complete full development and management of ISBE's early childhood catalogue based on early childhood data in CloudPak.

## *Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality*

In Q4, NIU will: support agencies in loading data into the ILDS 2.0 standardized analysis platform, as well as provide technical assistance in the creation of data dictionaries, standardization of demographic variables, and data manipulation to support needed analysis.

## **Bonus Activities**

### **1. Major activities and accomplishments**

#### *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment*

All four participating communities launched the Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS) tool in their communities and have begun sending and receiving referrals from network partners. In preparation for the launch, the communities developed Community Standards of Use, trained their partners on the use of IRIS, went over data governance structure, and updated client consent processes. The four communities also identified System and Data Managers to maintain their IRIS networks.

#### *I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice*

In Q3, INCCRRA held an I/ECMHC Orientation in September 2021 with 18 participants. Two new Reflective Learning Group (RLG) Facilitators were identified and added for two Virtual RLGs, totaling eight. The RLG Leadership quarterly meeting occurred on September 10, 2021, to provide updates on the process for issuing CEUs and Gateways Registry credit for participation in RLGs. The I/ECMHC Quarterly Meeting was held on July 29, 2021, with 53 consultants attending; updates were provided on the I/ECMH Consultant Database, annual symposium, public awareness activities, professional development updates, and I/ECMHC Model revisions. INCCRRA continues to process

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applications for the [I/ECMH Consultant Database](#) and provided technical assistance to individuals needing help with joining the Gateways Registry. More than 75 applications have been received. Works continues around the development of the activity tracking portal for I/ECMH Consultant use as well as requirements around outcomes data tracking.

## *Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

Wabash Area Development (WADI): In Q3, WADI continued their Summer Program for students transitioning into Kindergarten. Packets were delivered to families through July. All virtual kindergarten field trips were created using COR Advantage and sent to families the last week of the summer program. Services were provided for a total of seven weeks. Kindergarten transition folders were hand delivered to each school district in August. The Transition Support Specialist made in-person contact with each delivery to improve program relationships. Pre and post Conscious Discipline surveys for families transitioning into Kindergarten were collected and reviewed along with pre and post assessments of the summer program. Memorandums of Understanding were sent to each school district to build community relationships and improve lines of communication.

United Way – East St. Louis: Activities in Q3 were largely focused on the Early Learning Partnership's (ELP) Ready, Set, ENROLL! initiative, which seeks to connect children and families in the community to high-quality early learning programs, engagement with which is a key factor in Kindergarten Readiness. The planning team met biweekly, and family liaisons brought on three additional consultants who supported safe/socially distanced outreach to families, encouraging enrollment. Professional development was also conducted during Q3: five home- and center-based providers received training on quality business practice from IFF/STAR; 12 early learning teachers in the area attended the kickoff session in PBS's playful learning series; and four family liaisons were trained by COFI in three sessions, which focused on leadership development in the context of community outreach.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): Austin Coming Together (ACT) and Austin Childcare Providers' Network (ACPN) continue to meet twice monthly to update and strategize with GOECD as well as with the Core Planning (Advisory) Team to review progress and receive feedback/insights on plans for the child care provider's training and coaching. ACT and ACPN continue meetings with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to discuss goals and ways to interact with local community schools. It is important to note that the main priority is training and coaching with child care providers and collaboration with CPS is

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secondary. ACT/ACPN have been drafting an action plan to outline effective engagement between CPS, ACT, and ACPN to make expectations for all parties clear. As an action plan is being reviewed, ACT/ACPN is currently crafting an MOU between ACT, ACPN, and CPS to solidify the partnership. Currently, ACPN has been engaging an evaluator regarding data collection and analysis.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): Q3 encompassed summer break and the start of the new school year, a time when the Transitions Team does not meet. While the teachers enjoyed their summer break, BPI used the time to plan for the upcoming year. BPI mapped out the Teacher Transition Team meeting schedule for the 2021/2022 school year and continued to plan for professional development to be provided throughout the year. BPI dedicated a significant amount of time throughout the quarter to encouraging enrollment in preschool programs.

## **2. Problems**

*Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

United Way – East St. Louis: As stated in previous reports, burnout is the largest barrier to this work. Families, teachers, and administrators are all overwhelmed by the constant changes and have voiced the need to slow some of the activities. In addition, limitations to school physicals due to staff capacity and increased cleaning/disinfecting policies have created barriers for early learning and Kindergarten enrollment.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): ACT/ACPN currently have a small pool of child care providers with a limited capacity to fill the spots for curriculum training. To avoid the risk of thwarting the whole project due to lack of attendance, ACT/ACPN is working to increase the pool of candidates with the larger ACPN network of providers.

ACT and ACPN have received feedback on the draft action plan submitted to GOECD and CPS. ACT/ACPN is at a stage where their Advisory Team is reviewing the action plan to ensure it will align and advance the program's vision and goals. Once this action plan is revised and approved, ACT/ACPN believes the partnership and the collaboration process with CPS will be formalized. In the meantime, ACT/ACPN is developing an MOU and engaging the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services to develop a process that ensures children suspected of having a special need are referred and assessed in a timely manner.

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Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): Enrollment continues to be a very serious challenge for pre-k and Kindergarten programs. Despite school opening in-person this year, COVID's disruption to the entire early learning system cannot be overstated. For this reason, attendance will likely continue to be an important foundational common classroom practice on which the Transitions Team will focus.

### **3. Significant findings and events**

#### *Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment*

On August 4, 2021, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research facilitated the second quarterly Learning Community for the four home visiting communities. The Learning Community focused on providing an update on each community's implementation progress and a discussion on workflows to coordinate home visiting referrals in each community.

#### *Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

Wabash Area Development (WADI): The WADI team lost several employees to various school districts when the new school year began. The local Special Education District has reached out to WADI to discuss collaboration expectations. A future in-person meeting has been scheduled.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): ACT/ACPN continue to prioritize the planning and implementation of trainings and coaching for the select child care providers on curriculum and assessment. They are working with several stakeholders to develop long-term strategies around creating a seamless transition to Kindergarten for Austin youth. During Q3, ACT/ACPN made progress towards finalizing an action plan between ACT, ACPN, CPS, and the Advisory Team. Previously, ACT/ACPN had difficulty aligning with CPS on next steps as they were engaging principals, network administrators, and the Chief of Early Childhood Education at different times.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): The Transitions program continues to serve as an important opportunity for teachers to align, coordinate, and learn together. The partnership with JPA (Juvenile Protective Association) has been particularly impactful. After providing some trauma-based PD for the team, the work with JPA has blossomed into a full-grown program. JPA social workers are now in all the schools and centers in the community working with teachers to build their skills so they can better address the effects of stress and trauma students may be experiencing.

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#### **4. Dissemination activities**

*Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment*

The launch of IRIS across the four communities was announced through the September issue of the GOECD monthly newsletter.

*I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice*

INCCRRA continues to disseminate all registration information for I/ECMHC professional development opportunities and event through a variety of sources.

*Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI shared kindergarten transition folders with receiving school districts. These folders included medical history, work samples, and an evaluation of kindergarten readiness for each child transitioning into kindergarten.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): ACT provided trainings to the child care providers who are participating in the Kindergarten Transition project.

United Way – East St. Louis: Through this year's Ready, Set, ENROLL! activities, liaisons distributed over 5,000 flyers to businesses, at events, and through door-to-door outreach. Eight hundred and twenty early learning kits were also distributed during this time in partnership with UniPres Kindercottage and PNC Bank.

#### **5. Other activities**

*Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI continued to create lesson plans, order materials, and assemble packets for the summer program. Post Conscious Discipline Surveys were completed by families transitioning out of the Head Start program. The Transition Support Specialist began monitoring the initial kindergarten readiness screening for the 2021-2022 school year and completed trainings related to Social Emotional screening materials.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): BPI had a quarterly briefing with Chicago Public Schools to continue to strengthen that partnership and find ways to collaborate.

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**6. Activities planned for the next reporting period**

*Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment*

In Q4, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research will continue to provide technical assistance support to the four communities as well as ongoing support for staff with the System Manager and/or Data Manager role.

*I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice*

In Q4, INCCRRA will: maintain Reflective Learning Groups; provide for State System Communications and Connectors; provide ongoing logistics, supports, and technology for professional development delivery and data tracking; support and maintain the statewide I/ECMH Consultant database through the Gateways Registry; implement, support, and maintain the I/ECMH Consultation Activity Tracker database; identify requirements around outcomes data tracking and pilot with a group of consultants; and produce I/ECMHC reports and resources.

*Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades*

Wabash Area Development (WADI): In Q4, WADI plans to assemble Conscious Discipline material bags and pass them out to newly enrolled families. In November, mid-surveys will be completed with new families and post-surveys will be completed by returning families. Staff members will begin a new Conscious Discipline training online while families will continue with the parent curriculum. WADI is planning to host a Collaboration Meeting in November with details pending COVID-19 restrictions.

United Way – East St. Louis: In Q4, United Way plans to: present the final action plan, including accountability matrix, to key stakeholders involved in carrying out ELP's work; develop a twelve month budget for program year 2022; begin assessing sustainability needs for work to continue past calendar year 2022; and draft a fund development plan for supports outlined in the action plan and strategic plan.

Austin Coming Together (ACT): During Q4, ACT/ACPN will: work with the evaluator and funder to develop evaluation design and matrices for the program implementation; finalize the action plan that maps out the relationship/partnership between ACT/ACPN and CPS; develop an MOU to solidify the partnership between ACT/ACPN and CPS; partner with the Chicago Public Schools Office of Diverse Learner Supports & Services; increase the pool of child care providers engaged in the transition initiative; conduct training and pre-assessments with a cohort of child care providers; and continue



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convening biweekly core planning meetings to discuss the logistics and best practices for the Austin Kindergarten Transition project.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): In Q4, BPI will kick off meetings for the 2021/2022 school year, implement a PD calendar, and assess common classroom practices.