Applicant Final Panel Summary Report

Application Number: TP20000153
Application Name: Arizona Department of Education
State: AZ City: Phoenix

Criteria Name (Max Score)

1. Approach - Activity One: PDG B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment (6 Points)

    1.1. Program Description, Approach, Activity One; Needs Assessment Progress (2 Points)

    1.2. Needs Assessment Process (2 Points)

    1.3. How Needs Assessments Information was Collected (2 Points)

2. Approach - Activity Two: PDG B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan (10 Points)

    2.1. Program Description, Approach, Activity Two; Strategic Plan Progress (4 Points)

    2.2. Identification of Lessons Learned (2 Points)

    2.3. Leveraging Comprehensive Support Services (2 Points)

    2.4. Funding Efficiencies (2 Points)

3. Approach - Activity Three: Maximizing Parent and Family Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement in their Child's Early Learning and Development (12 Points)

    3.1. Program Description, Approach, Activity Three; Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Engagement Progress (4 Points)

    3.2. Active Partnerships Described (3 Points)

    3.3. How the State will Address Family Concerns (2 Points)

    3.4. How the State will Promote and Increase Family Engagement (3 Points)

4. Approach - Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce (12 Points)

    4.1. Approach - Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices Progress (3 Points)

4.2. Improving Provider Training and Experiences (4 Points)

4.3. Strategic Plan for Professional Development (3 Points)

4.4. Increased Availability of Qualified Providers (2 Points)

5. Approach - Activity Five: Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs (including subgranting) (20 Points)

5.1. Approach - Activity 5: Improving Overall Quality Progress (10 Points)

5.2. The extent to which the applicant successfully addresses one or both subgrant options. (10 Points)

6. Approach - Activity Six: Monitoring, Evaluation, Data Use for Continuous Improvement, Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement (30 Points)

6.1. Data Collection, Management, and Use (3 Points)

6.2. Linking Existing Data (3 Points)

6.3. Unduplicated Count Status and Plans (2 Points)

6.4. Methods to Promote Accountability (3 Points)

6.5. Addressing Fragmentation and Overlaps (3 Points)

6.6. Program Performance Evaluation Plan, Approach and Timeline (4 Points)

6.7. Governance Structure (6 Points)

6.8. Applicant has Identified its Key Partners and Stakeholders (6 Points)

7. Project Budget and Budget Justification (6 Points)

7.1. Budget Justification (2 Points)

7.2. Budget is Clearly Outlined and Provides Itemized Expenses (2 Points)

7.3. Cost Sharing Non-Federal Match Requirement (2 Points)

8. Project Sustainability Plan (4 Points)

8.1. Sustainability Plan (2 Points)

8.2. Funding Integration and Alignment (2 Points)

9. Bonus Points: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families (3 Points)

10. Bonus Points: Infant/Toddler Emphasis (3 Points)

11. Bonus Points: Collaborative Transition and Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades (3 Points)

TOTAL: 109

Scoring Criteria

Criterion 1: Approach - Activity One: PDG B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment

Criterion 1.1: Program Description, Approach, Activity One; Needs Assessment Progress

Strength:

> Page: 5-11

> The applicant clearly describes the status of the state's periodic statewide B-5 needs assessment including the partners engaged in developing and completing the needs assessment, how the state is addressing data gaps, and any plans for further updates. For example, the applicant used the Leading by Convening model of community engagement for meetings with community stakeholders. At the local and state level, this group of stakeholders included state agency partners such as Arizona Head Start Association (AZDHS), Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), and First Things First (FTF), with support from Read on Arizona (ROA)and Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children (AZAEYC). The needs assessments and strategic plans included the largest representation of Arizona's Early Childhood Education (ECE) system partners, including The Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO); First Things First (FTF); The Department of Economic Security - Child Care Administration (DES-CCA); and Read On Arizona (ROA). The applicant identified gaps for all partners in these two critical areas: increasing access to or improving the quality of the ECE system. The applicant conduced two intentional activities, designed to increase the capacity of Local Planning Committee (LPC) members to plan for and implement systems-level work, which was followed by a meta-analysis of all of the local work to inform Arizona Department of Education (ADE) creation of a strategic plan with additional strategies. In addition the applicant provides a clear description of activities in the statewide B-5 needs assessment. The applicant used existing regional councils, local planning committees that are highly diverse due to the engagement of the First Things First organization and state and local partners to conduct a review of existing early childhood needs assessments. Each of the separate needs assessments were aligned to the priority areas identified by the applicant of Child Care Deserts; Inclusion; Early Language and Literacy; Workforce Development-PD and Coaching; Workforce Development- Degree Completion. The resultant crosswalk of is a strength of the application because it will guide the proposed needs assessment and house data gaps and plans for further updates.

Weakness:

> Page: No page found.

> No weaknesses found.

Criterion 1.2: Needs Assessment Process

Strength:

Page: 11-14

The applicant provides a clear description of the process used in completing a needs assessment, and updating the needs assessment, that meets the requirements set forth in Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity One. For example, the ADE created the approved comprehensive statewide needs assessment, leveraging current needs assessments of Arizona' ECE system partner, which were identified as being representative of the early childhood system as a whole. The system's partners recognized key concerns and issues related to the quality and availability of early childhood care and education. The statewide needs assessment and five-year strategic plan for the HSSCO was included. As a result of the statewide needs assessments, the applicant determined the HSSCO Strategic Plan, which include Long Range Goal 2 and Long Range Goal 3. The applicant describes its plan to update the needs assessments as the assessments of each of the system partners are reviewed and updates. The applicant identifies broad action items for each major partner to review or analyze needs assessment data from 2020-2022.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 1.3: How Needs Assessments Information was Collected

Strength:

Page: 11-14

The applicant describes a clear plan how it is working to complete the needs assessment, and provides a description of the collaborative process used to collect information related to the requirements as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity One. For example, the applicant indicated that the partners were collecting and reporting about their data independent of one another. This resulted in the findings from one partner's needs assessment were not being shared and/or cross-referenced with another partner's findings, which slowed the progress in integrated data sharing. The applicant indicates that this grant opportunity will give ADE funding to support a statewide integrated, centralized data system where data related to the goals of each system partner is collected. The ECE system partners have agreed to have ADE serve as the administrative home for the system. The applicant provides evidence of established collaborative partnerships for development of new needs assessments. The process used to collect data was collaborative. For example, existing needs assessment data from current early childhood education partners was reviewed. This ensured the engagement of multiple agencies and data from across the state, including Read on Communities, First Things First Regional Partnership Councils and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. The local planning committees included First Things First Regional Council Members, Head Start Directors and staff, district personnel, community/private/faith-based personnel, and families. The applicant provides a timeline which lists each partner and their planned tasks toward the needs assessment in years 2-4. The applicant also discusses the partnerships that exist to help support families throughout the system and have a mixed delivery system.

Weakness:

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 2: Approach - Activity Two: PDG B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan

Criterion 2.1: Program Description, Approach, Activity Two; Strategic Plan Progress

Strength:

The applicant provides a clear description and evidence that it has developed and implemented a strategic plan as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity Two. For example, the planning year of the PDG B-5 grant has been foundational to developing regional growth and statewide collaboration to address regional needs and to develop a strategic plan. The applicant describes the primary models that were offered, such as Implementation Science, leading by Convening, and Lectio. The applicant describes how groups were convened to engage in complex problem solving (Leading by Convening), teach groups about the components necessary to have socially significant outcomes (Implementation Science), and support groups to evaluate the impact of their current initiatives (Lectio). These models assisted in enhancing and complementing partner agency initiatives for each of the identified five priority needs areas. The applicant indicates, by the end of the six months, each region produced strategic plans reflecting their needs within the five priority areas and developed relationships with key practitioners as well as staff in each region. The applicant indicates that the LPCs will continue to be supported through the next phase of implementation to install, implement, and sustain programs identified by the regions to address statewide needs through the use of the Implementation Science Framework and the Leading by Convening Model. Activities are bening developed to share data and assess progress through regular meetings in support of the ongoing activities of the regions. The applicant addresses the status on the completion of a strategic plan. The timelines provided on Page 56-57 provide an outline of the activities planned. The applicant provides evidence that it has developed strategic plans across state regions. For example, the applicant supported the development of regional strategic plans aligned to the five priority areas. The process was led by the regional local planning committees that will also support phase 2 of installation, implementation and sustain regional programs. A strength of the application is the applicant's use of structured processes to guide the strategic planning process in each region, including Leading by Convening, Implementation Science and Lectio.

Weakness:

No weaknesses noted.

Criterion 2.2: Identification of Lessons Learned

Strength:

The applicant clearly describes what was learned from each of the key activities for which it was funded in the initial grant year and the implications of that learning for future activities within the state including what it is now doing differently than it was doing prior to the initial grant. For example, the applicant used the tools,

guidance, professional development, and technical assistance to determine what's being done (mapping programs and services on the continuum from awareness building to change of behavior and gaining a deeper understanding of core content, mechanism, dosage, target population, staff development and evaluation) and using implementation science as a planning tool for identified new programs or initiatives that meet a gap identified in their needs assessment. The applicant clearly noted lessons learned from the strategic planning process. For example, the strength of existing partner relationships allowed the applicant to address challenges related to personnel attrition, which further highlighted the need for each region to have a plan and the tools to continue planning efforts. The involvement of university researchers helped each region to access and analyze data was also a strength of the proposal because it helped ensure data conclusions were meaningful and valid. The applicant intends to continue the use of implementation science as a planning tool.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 2.3: Leveraging Comprehensive Support Services

Strength:

Page: 25-31

The applicant describes the degree to which it has included, incorporated, and aligned comprehensive support services focusing on health, mental health, nutrition, social services, early intervention, special education, and other areas or groups. For example, the applicant describes the support services, which were informed by the Inclusion Task Force, Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP), and the Itinerant Service model. The applicant also describes how it has partnered with several community stakeholders, including the Governor Office of Youth, Faith, and Family; FTF; ROA, the Arizona Early Intervention Project, the Alesi Group, and the AHSA to establish the Social-Emotional and Early Learning (SEEL) Committee to raise awareness in the importance of social emotional learning and its connection to language and literacy development. The applicant also describes the Child Safety and Well-Being Initiative with a collective impact approach to address the integration of child safety, family stability, and well-being for vulnerable children at risk of entering the system. The applicant addresses health and nutrition the current partnership ADE has with the unit responsible for the oversight of the Child and Care Adult Food Program (CACFP) to encourage ECE programs to make health and nutrition an integral part of their programming. In addition the applicant clearly indicates how it intends to align health, mental health, social services, and early intervention supports. For example, the First Things First quality improvement and rating system, Quality First, includes access to Child Care Health Consultation, Mental Health Consultation, and Inclusion Coaching and impacts Head Start and other Arizona Department of Education programs. Each regional needs assessment also addresses childcare deserts, inclusion and early language literacy.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 2.4: Funding Efficiencies

Strength:

The applicant shows clear evidence that previous preschool grant funds impacted how funds were spent and efficiencies. For example, previous funding helped expand the quality rating scale to Head Start and other state programs and current funding will support the development of a statewide integrated, centralized data system. Other alignment involves leveraging funds and supports for family navigation and nutrition. The applicant demonstrates that this grant opportunity will give ADE funding to support a statewide integrated, centralized data system where data related to the goals of each system partner is collected.

Weakness:

Page: No Page Found

The applicant does not clearly describe how it is already spending money differently and/or plans to do so because of what was learned in the initial grant year; how funding has been aligned; what greater efficiencies have been realized, are beginning to be realized; and what additional funding streams are being engaged to create greater efficiencies and more unified and holistic program delivery system serving children from birth to school entry and as they transition.

Criterion 3: Approach - Activity Three: Maximizing Parent and Family Knowledge, Choice, and Engagement in their Child's Early Learning and Development

Criterion 3.1: Program Description, Approach, Activity Three; Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Engagement Progress

Strength:

Page: 14-19

The applicant has a sound plan and clearly describes current and proposed activities to learn from parents what they want and need to know, and to better inform all families, including families with English as a second language and families who have a young child with a disability, about, and connect them to, existing resources, services, and programs across the B-5 system; empower family choice and engage families in their young children's care and education as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity Three. For example, the applicant clearly describes how it used input from families during the development phase of the statewide initiative. The state partners provide ECE knowledge to families in Spanish and other home languages, such as Arizona PBS (AzBPS), Head Start programs, and Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV). The applicant indicates that Raising Special Kids (RSK) and FTF Family Resource Network have developed parent to parent communication programming that support children with disabilities, and ECE knowledge and resources. The applicant provides a clear description of the work of several partners in supporting families with English as a second language, children with disabilities about resources and services. Page 15 discusses several groups, one of which is the Child Care Resource and Referral. The CCRR is a partner organization who offers support to families and increasing their knowledge base of available resources. The CCRR provides support in English and Spanish and offers supports for finding providers. Page 16 also discusses the CCRR support in providing families with financial assistance and linkage to social service programs.

Weakness:

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 3.2: Active Partnerships Described

Strength:

Page: 14-19

The applicant clearly describes active partnerships to ensure all families, including tribal families, families with English as a second language, and families who have a young child with disabilities, are informed about and connected to other services needed, such as housing, food, training or employment programs, income supports, health and mental health, and efforts to support families with child care. For example, the applicant clearly describes partnerships and initiatives that have been established for engaging families with existing resources, services and programs, including: Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R); Local Head Start Policy Council and Parent Committees; MIECHV; FTF Regional Partnership Councils; FTF Family Resource Network; Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC): Raising Special Kids (RSK); The Arizona Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC); Arizona PBS; Read On Communities (ROCs); and the Early Childhood Quality Improvement Process (ECQUIP). The applicant indicates that CCR&R is directly linked to the new national Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) website and provides search capacities to parents when looking for child care options. CCR&R provides guidance in both English and Spanish for child care financial assistance. The applicant indicates that membership positions on each of the 28 FTF Regional Councils are held for both a Tribal and a parent representative. For example, parent and Tribal representatives are included in the 28 First Things First Regional Councils. Partnership with RSK advances project outreach efforts through Arizona's Parent Training and Information Center, Family-To-Family Health Information and Education Center, and Early Intervention Center Referral Project.

Weakness:

Page: 9-11

The applicant does not clearly indicate the degree to which parents are engaged through existing networks. Although there are varied entities listed, additional information regarding how well the entities have engaged parents may have strengthened this section.

Criterion 3.3: How the State will Address Family Concerns

Strength:

Page: 16-18

The applicant clearly describes plans that will ensure that families' concerns are elicited and effectively responded to, and that all families who have concerns about their child's development, are aware of an existing disability or delay, or are at risk for developmental delays, are informed about IDEA services, are connected to resources, and have access to high-quality inclusive early learning programs. For example, the applicant provides guidance, technical assistance, to collaborate with families, current practitioners, and agency personnel to address the inclusion of children with disabilities in programs with typically developing children, target locations where children are not transitioning from early intervention into preschool, as well as ensure all transitions are completed within required timeline. The applicant indicates that FTF funds voluntary, evidence-based home visitation programs, which are effective methods of improving outcomes for families and children experiencing various risk

factors. The applicant describes how it will utilize model programs, such as Healthy Families, Nurse Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 3.4: How the State will Promote and Increase Family Engagement

Strength:

Page: 17-18

The applicant provides clear examples of opportunities to improve family engagement and leadership in improving the state's mixed delivery system, such as membership on advisory committees with meaningful involvement in designing and improving programs and services, interpreting continuous quality improvement data, goal-setting, strategic planning, and implementation of state efforts. For example, the applicant clearly describes how all families are supported and respected as leaders in these activities, and how families across geographic regions and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are meaningfully engaged. The applicant describes membership positions on each of the 28 FTF Regional Councils and Raising Special Kids (RSK) serves as a Comprehensive Family Resource Center operating at a statewide level with offices set up regionally. The applicant demonstrates that as Arizona's Comprehensive Family Resource Center, RSK offers Parent-To-Parent programs, serves as Arizona's Parent Training and Information Center, houses Arizona's Family-To-Family Health Information and Education Center, is part of the Arizona chapter of Family Voices, and is a key partner in Arizona's Early Intervention Center Referral Project. The applicant indicates that the Arizona Family Engagement and Language/Literacy workgroup (FE workgroup), facilitated by ROA and ADE, will guide development of the SFEC's special advisory committee, a parent-majority group that will provide consistent input and feedback referred to as the Parent Leadership Council (PLCs). The applicant demonstrates that the coordinated facilitation of these groups will break down silos, creating a unified, parent-led effort to school improvement by bringing stakeholders together to determine the best way tondeliver family engagement tools and resources to disadvantaged families.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 4: Approach - Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce

Criterion 4.1: Approach - Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices Progress

Strength:

Page: 23-29

The applicant clearly describes current and proposed professional development and best practice activities as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity Four. For example, the Professional

Development Work Group (PDWG) is an FTF collaborative made up of ECE professionals and advocates to promote the professional development of the Arizona ECE workforce. The PDWG consists of three subgroups focused on: finance and outreach; institutes of higher education articulation; and, professional standards for practitioners. The applicant proposes using the grant funding to continue to educate early childhood practitioners and administrators, such as in Head Start, Community Based Early Childhood Programs, Family Child Care, Public school early childhood programs to increase their awareness and understanding the importance of educating young children in inclusive settings. Page 23 discusses the partnership with the Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network. This network would be to advocate for workers and promote training and workforce development. Courses are offered online and include a workforce registry, knowledge and competencies and a career lattice tool among other things. The applicant provides several examples of proposed training and best practice activities.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 4.2: Improving Provider Training and Experiences

Strength:

Page: 23-29

The applicant provides a description of its efforts to improve the training and experience of B-5 early childhood care and education providers in the state, including beginning or increasing ongoing practice-based coaching, mentoring, and assessing professional development needs of the early childhood care and education workforce leading to improved outcomes for children; and inclusion strategies for children with or at risk for disabilities and delays. For example, the applicant proposes to use funding from this grant to enhance and continue the Pyramid Model Consortium, to expand new professional development opportunities that align with Arizona's ECE continuum of early learning supports. The applicant plans to form a statewide team to determine their ability to pilot programs as Pyramid Model sites and to train individuals within the field and at the statewide level to become Pyramid Model trainers/coaches to support the program's initiatives. Improved training and experience of B-5 early childhood care providers is demonstrated within the project and between partners. For example, the applicant offers interactive website offerings for early learning professionals. The website offers access to the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry and the Arizona Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, as well as the ability to register education credentials, track training hours, and modify professional development plans.

Weakness:

Page: 23-29

The applicant does not provide a description of its efforts to improve the training and experience of B-5 early childhood care and education providers in the state to include trauma-informed approaches to address adverse experiences.

Criterion 4.3: Strategic Plan for Professional Development

Strength:

The applicant provides a clear description of the development of credential certifications and coursework for professional development. Page 23-24 describes the Professional Development Network which will lead the advocacy and instruction for professionals in the early education. The workforce registry is introduced as a way to allow professionals to register their credentials and track hours toward certification. The applicant also discusses on Page 24 the use of PDG funds toward scholarships intended for staff to obtain Child Development Credentials or Associate Degrees. The applicant clearly details strategies for professional development and higher education. For example, the Arizona Higher Education Accreditation project and the Early Childhood Higher Education System Navigator. The resulting 13 accredited early childhood programs and the increased number of student completing the degree are clear indicators of improving the landscape by strengthening the workforce.

Weakness:

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 4.4: Increased Availability of Qualified Providers

Strength:

The applicant identifies the strategies already implemented to address the increased availability of qualified providers throughout the state, especially in rural areas. For example, beginning in 2014, PDG funds were utilized for scholarships to increase the credentials/degrees among the ECE workforce. This funding stream complemented the College Scholarships for Early Childhood Professionals program that may be used for coursework toward a Child Development Credential (CDA) or Associate degree, including those who serve in rural communities or on indigenous nations. The applicant discusses the expansion of professional development targeting staff who work throughout the state with an emphasis on rural districts. The applicant indicates that PDG funds were also used for ECE professionals to pursue a bachelor's or master's degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, or a related degree program. The applicant provides evidence of strategies used to increase the number of qualified providers. For example, a 2014 grant provided scholarships for those in the workforce to complete coursework toward a credential or degree. Also, the workforce has access to the Arizona Career Lattice tool where they can track professional development or work experience. This data collection can not only allow for workforce professional self reflection, but can also alert the state if numbers of qualified personnel or professional pursuits are dwindling.

Weakness:

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 5: Approach - Activity Five: Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs (including subgranting)

Criterion 5.1: Approach - Activity 5: Improving Overall Quality Progress

Strength:

Page: 23-48; 55-58

The applicant provides a clear and detailed plan, including timelines, outlining the state activities to improve overall quality; expand access to existing ECE programs and develop new programs to address the needs of children and families eligible for, but not serviced by, such programs. The applicant state prioritizes activities to improve areas in which there are state-identified needs that would improve services for low-income and disadvantaged children living in rural areas, including children with disabilities and children in tribal communities. For example, the applicant uses a two-tier approach to identify both statewide and local strategies designed to improve the overall quality of the ECE system. Arizona's proposed activities align with the five key priority focus areas, such as childcare deserts, inclusion, early language and literacy, workforce development, and effective transitions for all children. The applicant demonstrates that it proposes to select programs to increase access to high-quality early care and education slots using the following data points: total population of children aged birth to five; percentage of children within the county being served in a early care and education setting; percentage of families within the county that are at 200 percent or below the federal poverty level; local school district's percentage of children scoring proficient or higher on both the ELA and math portion of the 3rd grade AzMerit; the percentage of English Learners (ELs); and the programs' capacity to serve infants and toddlers. The applicant presents a year 1 timeline that depicts how activities will be rolled out during the grant. For example, the applicant will contract with First Things First in the Year 1, 1st quarter to continuation of the quality and improvement rating system Quality First.

Weakness:

Page: 55-58

The applicant does not clearly discuss how it intends to prioritize subgrants to areas in which there are state-identified needs or how they would know the subgrant would improve services for low-income and disadvantaged children living in rural areas. Additional detail is needed on project strategies to address children experiencing homelessness.

Criterion 5.2: The extent to which the applicant successfully addresses one or both subgrant options.

Strength:

Page: 34-38

The applicant sufficiently describes the specific needs as identified from the needs assessment, strategic plan, or other planning done by the State Advisory Council or similar state advisory body, as well as how these findings relate to the proposed activities. The applicant is proposing activities, including the use of subgrants directly to programs in targeted communities across the state. The applicant clearly describes in sufficient detail the need for the program or service, the gaps that need to be addressed, the children and families to be served, the comprehensiveness of the services to be provided, and the reasons why this program is important for a particular targeted community. The applicant justifies the proposed project period length and number of subawards, and how the proposed length and numbers support the use of PDG B-5 funds for the greatest impact. The applicant highlights the extent to which the program or services being proposed are targeted to improve

outcomes for low-income and disadvantaged children in the mixed delivery system. This includes children with disabilities and those living in rural areas. The applicant provides an estimated number of programs, children and families that will benefit from the activities supported by subgranted funds. The applicant clearly states its intent to address the need for additional childcare slots in the state and improvement in how staff are trained through the subgrant process. The need for the project is directly related to outcomes from the needs assessment, Kids Count data and the deficit of 22,228 licensed childcare slots statewide for children under the age of six noted by the recent Child Care Aware Mapping the Gap Brief. The applicant provides a roster of broadly worded objectives for the project in the abstract that align with the project's priority areas. The applicant has a plan to include children from Tribal communities through Tribal representation on the First Things First regional councils and Tribal councils that may form as a result of the project and the varied state agency partners that serve Tribal communities. This approach will allow for an additional 1,000 to 1,900 children to be served each year of the grant.

Weakness:

Page: 34-38

In the first year the applicant proposes the use of 65 percent of funding toward subgrants and only 60 percent is allowable as per the funding opportunity announcement (FOA). Additionally the FOA page 36 discusses the requirement for subgrantees to be nationally accredited or participate in the Quality First QRIS and licensed by AZDHS, DES, Tribal Licensing or Military Licensing. While there is discussion about these requirements, the applicant does not provide a clear list of intended subgrants or timelines associated with them. There are also no SMART goals or objectives with in the application.

Criterion 6: Approach - Activity Six: Monitoring, Evaluation, Data Use for Continuous Improvement, Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

Criterion 6.1: Data Collection, Management, and Use

Strength:

Page: 44-48

The applicant clearly and succinctly indicates the status of the various aspects of data collection, management, and use as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity 6 and indicates if each aspect is in the planning process. The applicant proposes to create an integrated, centralized data system that will allow for state partners to house and access pre-school and K-12 data on one platform. The infrastructure for a linked system is in the planning process and was noted by applicant partner needs assessment as a necessary support The applicant has included the use of $2.2 million from the grant to support infrastructure-building an information technology (IT) to align preschool data with the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The applicant has identified achievement gaps, pinpointed initiatives that best promote positive outcomes, and accessed data for longitudinal analysis. It is a priority for the applicant to evaluate additional opportunities to support vertical articulation of outcomes data along the early childhood continuum (birth through third grade). In year one of the PDG implementation, the applicant partnered with Read On Arizona (ROA) and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to launch a data-mapping tool called MapLIT. ROA partners creased the MapLIT as a one stop resource to identify key data sets (census, school, health, family engagement) that impact early literacy outcomes in the communities. ROA developed a population-level integrated data system (IDS) that combines data from a range of programs that serve children and young adults. The applicant indicates that ROA has chosen to focus on a public-facing tool that integrates population-level data to show a holistic picture of child outcomes. In addition to

MapLIT providing data, the applicant provides TA on evaluating data already available to them, to identify new data sources, and to confirm regional needs assessments. An additional data tool, Explore AZ Schools, was created to intentionally engage families to learn more about education options from Pre-K to high school to make an informed education choice for their children. This includes customized search factors, such as English language arts scores, math scores, student demographics, full or half-day kindergarten, A-F school letter grades and more information.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 6.2: Linking Existing Data

Strength:

Page: 30, 47-48

The applicant clearly describes the state's capability or intent to link information across health and early learning programs, with plans to create or enhance the systems to improve accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of information that can be used to inform policy or practice. For example, MapLIT, a shared integrated data system focused on early literacy from birth to third grade, and contains data including: early learning sites and language/literacy Teaching Strategies Gold data, as well as all K-3 schools in Arizona with data on proficiency, enrollment, chronic absenteeism, home visiting, family engagement, health factors and census data. This system is powered by Maricopa Association of Governments, partnered with Read on Arizona and funded by ADE, MapLIt needs were determined based on Arizona's 3rd grade reading scores and Arizona'a Move On When Reading law. The applicant has multiple early childhood data systems managed by varied agencies and organizations. There is currently no capacity to link across systems. Therefore, the proposed system represents a strength the application because it will be utilized by any entity in Arizona that provided early childhood education. Use of the MapLIT platform is a strength of the application because it allows communities to analyze data, including childcare deserts and early intervention of language and literacy skills.

Weakness:

Page: 47-48

The applicant does not clearly describe the degree to which the state current early childhood data systems are able to link data across early childhood programs, including child care subsidies; IDEA Part B, section 619; IDEA Part C; State Pre-K; Head Start and Early Head Start; Public Primary Education K-3; other programs such as TANF, WIC, Medicaid, SNAP, and Healthy Start. While the applicant provides discussion on the different data systems available there is no clear indication that the data sets being collected are those mentioned in the criterion.

Criterion 6.3: Unduplicated Count Status and Plans

Strength:

Page: 52-53

The applicant clearly describes their efforts to obtain a unique child count with in their integrated systems. Page 52 discusses the creation of unique identifiers on applications for all preschool children. The application's client identifier can be used through any state early childhood provider. Unique identifiers were also used by several other entities for Head Start students as well. This unique identifier generation allowed the state to generate a unique child count. The applicant indicates that a few Head Start entities received and Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant and began generating identifiers for infants and toddlers, in addition to the already existing general education Head Start students. This enabled Arizona to move toward the foundation for establishing a system that could provide a count toward an unduplicated number of children

Weakness:

Page: 52-53

While the applicant provides some information related to their current inablity to identify unduplicated counts they do not fully describe the existing status or plans for having a distinct, unduplicated count of children participating in early childhood care and education programs beyond the limited data noted (Head Start / Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships) to help the state understand patterns of service, inform resource allocation, and improve programs. Though some linkages are identified a fuller description related to all relevant areas is needed.

Criterion 6.4: Methods to Promote Accountability

Strength:

Page: 9, 30

The applicant clearly describes the tools and methods to promote accountability across the state's mixed delivery system. For example, the applicant describes the Arizona Quality Improvement and Rating System, Quality First (QF), which provides quality evaluation and accountability to early childhood programs, on-going technical assistance and professional development to programs through individualized coaching, financial incentives, childcare scholarships for low-income families, and access to early childhood developmental, hearing, vision, and oral screenings. QF-participating programs also have access to Child Care Health Consultation, Mental Health Consultation, and Inclusion Coaching. The applicant will use of the Quality First rating system to promote accountability. For example, the Quality First system enhances both evaluation and accountability by highlighting program performance in standardized key areas. Subgrantee use of the progress monitoring cycle and the accessible ratings from the Quality First system are clear examples of how the project will enhance accountability.

Weakness:

Page: 30

The applicant does not fully describe how the various accountability frameworks and practices efforts noted will connect so that they will be able to discern how they will measure the effectiveness of a mixed-delivery system. More detail is needed to clarify how these data points will be connected to promote accountability.

Criterion 6.5: Addressing Fragmentation and Overlaps

Strength:

Page: 13; 52-54

The applicant describes areas of fragmentation and/or overlap in the state's mixed delivery system and how the state is presently addressing or plans to address fragmentation and/or overlap. For example, to address the quantitative portion of the evaluation, the applicant is proposing to establish an integrated, centralized data system that will allow for state partners to house their data related to identified goals that can be shared and common to all stakeholders. In addition the proposed system will allow for collection of targeted data that will likely free the state's reliance on outside statewide assessments of the vitality of early childhood efforts. To meet the qualitative component of the evaluation, the applicant is proposing the development of a PDG B-5 website that will include the following: website creation and implementation; code implementation for live stream broadcasts; monthly content updates to include all text, photographic images, and video content; and monthly maintenance to include code updates, firmware updates, and security updates. The goal of the qualitative evaluation will be to demonstrate the impact and difference made in communities. The applicant provides a detailed description of the strategic planning work to work in addressing the numerous overlapping instances of services in the system. The applicant discusses recognizing the barriers in implementing ideas such as completion of procurements, identifying participants, etc. The applicant describes the partnering with the National Implementation Network to provide technical assistance with development of activities. The applicant also discussed the development of committees and group with wide range representation to cover all bases for identifying gaps. The proposed system will allow for collection of targeted data that will likely free the state's reliance on outside statewide assessments of the vitality of early childhood efforts.

Weakness:

Page: 52-54

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 6.6: Program Performance Evaluation Plan, Approach and Timeline

Strength:

Page: 20-22; 55-58

The applicant will ensure evaluation reporting and accountability facilitated by the use of Early Childhood Program Specialists (ECPS) within the state. The ECPS will ensure reporting and accountability by the applicant group. The applicant includes references to the qualitative portion of the of the evaluation project in the timeline (56-58) and the quantitative data will be provided by data from the database.

Weakness:

Page: 55-58

The applicant does not clearly describe a clear and comprehensive approach and timeline to update, enhance, and/or implement a clearly articulated Program Performance Evaluation Plan that meets all the elements as required by Section IV.2 The Project Description, Approach, Activity 6. The applicant does not provide any description of work to produce a Program Performance Evaluation Plan. There is a mention of the PPEP in the budget but nothing is discussed with in the narrative.

Criterion 6.7: Governance Structure

Strength:

Page: 53-54

The Arizona Department of Education will serve as the administrative lead for the project and has provided professional summaries for staff paid by the grant and their areas of oversight as noted in the budget justification. The partner listing in appendix c indicates that the department will administer from the Early Childhood Unit and has the authority to direct the project and make decisions. The applicant effectively describes a governance structure present within the system which will contribute to the work of the grant. Page 7 introduces the discussion of the local planning committees and their work on strategies and initiatives with in the region. The First Things First committees consists of representation from each region and tribal regions to inform decision making. There are non-voting ex officio members and the oversight of the council is held by administrative staff.

Weakness:

Page: 53-54

The applicant does not describe how the structure has changed since the initial grant application. The applicant does not provide a map showing the state' s decision-making path, who serves in an advisory capacity, and who are the decision-makers.

Criterion 6.8: Applicant has Identified its Key Partners and Stakeholders

Strength:

Page: 13-14; 54-55, 71

The applicant provides a chart that identifies and differentiates which stakeholders have been involved and will be involved in the assessment, planning, and implementation of all activities. The applicant, in Table 1: Timeline for updating needs assessments clearly links partners with a timeline of how the needs assessments will be updated. The applicant clearly describes the Leading by Convening model and illustrates how communication and dissemination of information is based on each designated level of participation. The applicant provides a chart of the levels of participation for the proposed project, including the Core Team, key participants, extended participants and feedback networks, and the dissemination network. The applicant provides a clear chart that identifies and differentiates which stakeholders have been involved and will be involved in the assessment, planning and implementation of all activities, including names of individuals, and ensuring representation from across the B-5 system including health and family support services. The chart outlined on Page 14 lists partner organization and activities to be completed in the three years of the grant. Appendix C also addresses this criterion by listing individuals and their organizations and the roles they play in project activities. The applicant lists project partners, their impact and contact persons. The impacts noted reflected supports or initiatives noted in the narrative and are clearly aligned with the applicant's five priority areas.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 7: Project Budget and Budget Justification

Criterion 7.1: Budget Justification

Strength:

Page: 60-67

The applicant submitted a clear budget justification consisting of a budget narrative and the related line-item budget details. For example, the applicant proposes a Federal budget of $15,000,000, and an in-kind match from other sources used to support the State's plan of $4,500,000, for a total Statewide budget of $19,500,000. The line items include the following: Personnel ($432,000); Fringe ($151,000); Travel ($45,000); Equipment ($2,500); Supplies ($2,000); Contractual ($4,533,000); Other ($75,000); Indirect ($759,500); and Commitment of Non-Federal Resources (Match Budget: $4,500,000). The applicant provides a clear budget and budget justification outlining reasonable costs for each budget line item. The applicant presented a project budget justification that details how funds are allocated and line item allocations. Each category is accompanied by a detailed description of how costs were derived.

Weakness:

Page: 60-67

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 7.2: Budget is Clearly Outlined and Provides Itemized Expenses

Strength:

Page: 60-67

The applicant clearly specifies the amount projected to be spent for each of the identified activities, including at least 5 percent of the total funds during during Year 1 allocated to refine and implement the program performance evaluation plan, which includes implementation reporting and data system planning activities, along with a description of how these funds will be used; the amount of their grant funding that will be used to support related technical assistance activities leading to successful implementation of grant requirements; and travel costs for at least four individuals to attend a 3-day meeting in Washington, D.C. The applicant budget is well-organized and includes required components. For example, a salary is provided for a 1-year contract for an evaluation manager and other supports for a noted total of $515,000 (5% of budget). An $800,000 allocation for technical assistance activities is also noted and travel supports for 6 persons to Washington, DC.

Weakness:

Page: 60-67

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 7.3: Cost Sharing Non-Federal Match Requirement

Strength:

Page: 72

The applicant provides a clear description of how the state will address the 30 percent matching requirement and a stated commitment that it will meet the match by the end of each of the 3 years. For example, the applicant provides a signed letter stating that First Things First (FTF) will provide an in-kind match in the amount of $13,500,000 to support the PDG B-5 initiative. The signed letter indicates that FTF will, at a minimum, provide $4,500,000 in an in-kind match each 12-month grant budget year. The signed letter also indicates that FTF reserves the right to accelerate its in-kind match and fulfill the total $13,5000 obligation prior to the end of the

three-year grant. The applicant details its approach to matching. The First Things First organization will contribute the in-kind match, $4,500,000 for each budget year. The applicant provides evidence of the 30% match commitment as required in this criterion. The applicant provides a commitment letter that the 30% match will be supplied by the First Things First initiative. This total amount can be accelerated at the discretion of the FTF executive director as noted in the letter.

Weakness:

Page: 60-67

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 8: Project Sustainability Plan

Criterion 8.1: Sustainability Plan

Strength:

Page: 57- 60

The applicant sufficiently indicates that policies are aligned to support the sustainability of any initiative, including governance and funding policies. The applicant clearly demonstrates the intent to use partnership to keep efforts going. For example, collaboration and coordination of existing regional councils and partnership with First Things First, which further ensures awareness or participation of the target area 22 Federally Recognized Tribes in Arizona, increases the likelihood of sustainability. The use of LPCs will also facilitate sustainability because they've been trained in specific methodology to advance assessment of existing services and program planning that addresses gaps in needs assessments. The applicant addresses some intent to braid funds through the state's expansion of the Kith and Kin project to other counties, given it offers information on identification, mental health consultation and infant toddler workforce. The applicant also states that sustainability efforts have been embedded in each of the activities and strategies of this grant application.

Weakness:

Page: 59-60

The applicant does not describe a clear sustainability plan to include how the state has or will develop partnerships, coalitions, and build concrete systems to keep their efforts going; its efforts to blend funds across programs in their mixed delivery system; and how it will determine what existing program rules or requirements may be negatively impacting collaboration and blending or braiding of funds. Throughout the application there is discussion of the partnerships that are a part of the early childhood education system but most of the discussion is of current efforts and those planned during the project period only.

Criterion 8.2: Funding Integration and Alignment

Strength:

Page: 7-10

The applicant describes additional funding streams the state is integrating or aligning to create greater efficiencies and more unified and holistic program delivery. The applicant indicates that Arizona's ambitious goals for children and families remain the same as they were in the PDG B5 Y1. These are: 1. to prepare more children

from vulnerable populations to enter school prepared to succeed; 2. to create a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health, and early education of all of Arizona children birth through age 5; 3. to use collaboration and coordination of the CE system to maximize parent knowledge and choice; engage all partners with a vested interest in Arizona children ages 0-5; and leverage resources (time, funding, and effort) 4. to ensure that work is aligned and coordinated to service will not be duplicated or supplanted with other federal or state initiatives. Arizona remains committed to using the mixed-delivery model of services to children and families. The applicant indicates that a statewide program is the Arizona Parent Kit to families of newborns leaving the hospital This Kit is free to families and contains tools for children's health development, early literacy, supporting oral health, and resources for future family support. FT also provides scholarships to the early childhood workforce to receive degrees from institutes of higher education. The applicant clearly describes their intent to build upon efforts from prior and current state initiatives. For example, the applicant seeks to continue to offer workforce scholarships and existing programming and outreach through its partners, including First Things First, units in the Arizona Department of Education and the Head Start Collaboration Office.

Weakness:

Page: 5 -9

The applicant does not address how funding efficiencies will be aligned. The narrative indicates that the state does not have a stable and secure funding sources to support high-quality early care and education. While the applicant describes various ways of improving programming to better align with the needs of families, there is no discussion specifically on how funds will be utilized differently as required in this criterion. The applicant does not provide a detailed description of how this award will build on progress from previous PDG, Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), PDG B-5, or other early childhood-focused initiatives, including how the state plans to spend funds differently because of what was learned in the initial grant year; how funding has been aligned and what greater efficiencies have been realized, are beginning to be realized, and/or are targeted for future realization.

Criterion 9: Bonus Points: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment for Families

Strength:

None

Weakness:

Page: No Page Found

The applicant did not address Bonus Points: Coordinated Application, Eligibility, and Enrollment of Families.

Criterion 10: Bonus Points: Infant/Toddler Emphasis

Strength:

Page: 33-34

The applicant describes an effort that supports activities that result in improved and expanded infant-toddler care, staffed family child care networks, better trained and more knowledgeable providers, and a focus on

identification and mitigation of developmental risk including infant and early childhood mental health consultation. For example, the applicant describes the Arizona Kith and Kin Project that has three main priorities: improve the quality of child care through training; increase caregiver's knowledge and understanding of early child development; and increase caregiver's knowledge and understanding of health and safety issues to provide a safer childcare environment. The proposed project will scale up the Keith and Kin project to other counties, other than the existing 13 counties, within the state to include indigenous nations. The applicant is proposing including CE providers who serve families with infants and toddlers. This scale up allows the state to honor parental choice relative to kinship care. The applicant indicates that included in the services offered will be a focus on the identification and the mitigation of developmental risk including infant and early childhood mental health consultation and on the infant toddler workforce. The applicant provides some evidence of having a focus on infant and toddler through the Kith and Kin project expansion. For example, the project will include early childhood education providers that serve families with infants and toddlers in the state. Both identification and mitigation of developmental risk including infant and early childhood mental health consultation and the overall infant toddler workforce.

Weakness:

Page: No page found.

No weaknesses found.

Criterion 11: Bonus Points: Collaborative Transition and Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

Strength:

Page: 41-43

The applicant clearly addresses Bonus Points: Collaborative Transition and Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades. The applicant proposes a clear and detailed plan for expanding an existing effort, to support smooth transitions and alignment of services for children and families across early childhood care and education settings into kindergarten and the early grades that includes parents and staff knowledgeable of the options and transition processes that will support each child's individual progress and developmental needs. To The applicant will expand efforts for effective transitions for all (collaborative transition and alignment from birth to the early grades). The following examples were provided as examples of this. The applicant describes the Kindergarten Developmental Inventory (KDI) to begin at kindergarten entry to generate a Child Profile of learning and development, and will continue through third grade, making information available to both teachers and families to inform teaching and learning. The KDI is aligned with the AzELS and the Arizona K-12 Academic Standards which allows for continuity of learning. These alignments support Arizona's third grade reading legislation (MOWR). Arizona proposed the selection of sites to receive training on the KDI tool. To expand the use of this the applicant has a goal to work with the ADE Research and Accountability Unit and the ADE Information Technology Unit on the creation of a platform that will connect birth-age 5 child outcomes data with a schoolwide Student Information System (SIS) or display on the ADECONNECT platform. The K-12 teachers and administrators, via a secure login portal, the ability to access child-level data. This will allow kindergarten teachers to have a greater understanding of the abilities, strengths, and skill sets of incoming children. The applicant seeks to expand its efforts to smooth transitions and alignment of services into kindergarten. For example, the use of kindergarten transition teams working with families, schools, communities, and early child providers to design and implement transitions inclusive of all children minimizes enrollment challenges and empowers parents so they can advocate for their child. The development of a web-based platform containing birth-age 5 child outcomes data with the state's school data

platform would also improve transition through data clearly linking early childhood with K-12 data The applicant provides a clear description of the current work being done to create smooth transitions for students and families as well as plans to expand that current work. Page 43 outlines the proposed plan to expand the Department of Education's training and development of the Kindergarten Developmental Inventory. The KDI was developed by a partnership of multiple agencies giving teachers the ability to gauge the readiness of every child. This also assisted in identifying children with special needs and those who needed more supports. This assessment also included tribal education programs.

Weakness:

Page: 41-43

No weaknesses found.