

Project Summary

Project Title: Alabama Connections for Early Care and Education

Applicant Name: Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

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

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

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

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