

Project Summary/Abstract (1 pg.)

Kansas Preschool Development Grant – *Connected Families, Connected Communities*

Kansas State Department of Education

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As the collaborative group that has developed this proposal, our Kansas vision for early childhood is: **Connected Families, Connected Communities – Every Child Thrives!** Our mission for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) is for **Kansas families to have informed and equitable access to seamless, comprehensive supports and services that ensure the well-being and lifelong success of all.** When the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) system engages and connects families in a meaningful, coordinated way that supports choice, best practices, and quality, communities are poised to ensure the success of each child. Connected communities become catalysts for connected families, and connected families have better opportunities to thrive. Early childhood stakeholders in Kansas have been building this foundation for nearly two decades and are positioned to leverage existing work to align funding streams, enhance shared measurement, and expand the seamless continuum of services so that families have access to what they want and need.

In 2019, we will engage in innovative, intensive strategies to understand what Kansans want and need to achieve our vision. We will engage a broad range of stakeholders in community engagement sessions that span our state’s geographically diverse areas. We will investigate key, targeted areas identified as needing additional information, including a better understanding of our needs as they relate to the ECE workforce, the state of ECE facilities, and opportunities to strengthen our state’s early childhood data infrastructure. To chart our course forward, we will convene over 200 ECE stakeholders, including parents and providers, in a summit to analyze the needs identified by Kansas families and communities through our needs assessment. We will use technology to capture stakeholder’s ideas to shape our final strategic plan. We will then travel across the state for a Road Show to reflect the strategic plan back to communities and roll out toolkits to support implementation of a *Connected Families, Connected Communities* approach.

We will strengthen three of Kansas’ family engagement strategies to maximize parental choice and knowledge of the state’s mixed-delivery system, including the parent helpline (1-800-CHILDREN), statewide parent leadership conference, and the Family Engagement and Partnership Standards to develop evidence-based practices that can be trained and replicated. We will spread best practices on trauma-informed, hope-infused strategies, family engagement, and language and literacy. After the strategic plan is approved, we will issue a request for proposals for quality grants, with an emphasis on what parents have identified in their communities.

The Kansas State Department of Education, led by the Kansas State Board of Education’s vision for education that Kansas leads the world in the success of each student, is well-positioned to convene partners to further this effort in 2019. As a result of these efforts, our ECE system will be optimized through meaningful engagement of families and stakeholders to support all children and families, particularly those who currently face a variety of risks that impede thriving.