

## Project Summary

**Title:** New Hampshire's Collective Vision for Quality Early Childhood Care and Education

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### Abstract

For many children and their families, New Hampshire is a great state in which to grow up and live. The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count report for 2018 ranked NH first in the nation overall in key areas of child well-being. While we are proud of our state's ranking, the averages mask a very real and persistent problem in NH, the disparate access to opportunity and differential outcomes for children based on where they live and how much money their parents earn. While the overall poverty rates in NH are among the lowest in the nation, in Manchester, the state's largest urban center, 1300 children under age 6 live at or below 50% poverty level. In Coös County, the state's most rural and geographically remote region, 1 in 5 children live in poverty and over half of the population qualify for free or reduced lunch. Moreover, at present, less than half of the children who receive NH Child Care Scholarships Program funds are enrolled in facilities participating in the higher tiers of NH's quality rating and improvement system. NH also faces one of the worst opioid crises in the country, ranking third-highest in overdose death rates. The effects of the crisis are evident every day in our early childhood programs and services throughout the state. Concurrent with the rise in opioid use, there is a 21% increase in child abuse and neglect investigations. While some progress has been made, the state has a long way to go in creating a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood system.

The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five provides the state the much-needed opportunity to better understand our current early childhood system and use those data to strengthen it, better address the needs of vulnerable young children and their families and help build a solid foundation to improve outcomes for our children, families, schools and communities. In particular funding will provide the opportunity to use data on child and family and systemic needs to inform a strategic plan to create a comprehensive coordinated early childhood care and education system to achieve our vision that all children and families in New Hampshire are healthy, learning and thriving now and in the future. This grant application describes the state's plan to: (1) achieve greater coordination of programs and services including braiding/blending of funding and a plan for strengthening data integration; (2) strengthen regional infrastructure better aligned with state governance; (3) improve parent leadership and engagement capacity; (4) increase provider and parent knowledge of the early childhood care and education system to facilitate access and smooth transitions among programs and services; (5) enhance infrastructure for early childhood care and education professional development; (6) improve the current system for evaluating and enhancing program quality; and (7) expand our statewide public awareness campaign on the importance of early childhood and launch a new campaign for parents on the "serve and return" interactions with their young children.