

PROJECT SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

- Project Title: *VA Ready: Strengthening Virginia's B-5 System for Kindergarten Readiness*
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VA has significant momentum for a strong ECCE system that prepares all children, regardless of background or zip code, for kindergarten. Across the state, local leaders have built public-private systems of collaboration across ECCE programs and are designed to meet the needs of area families. These communities provide a mature testing ground for innovative solutions to refine and scale proven strategies statewide. The Governor and First Lady have made ECCE a signature issue, and the VA legislature and business sector prioritize ECCE as essential for building a talented workforce. Given this momentum, PDG enables VA to build the capacity of state leadership; deeply understand families' needs, the landscape of ECCE programs, and effective quality improvement supports; ramp up supports for community efforts; and deliver efficient, responsive, and coordinated policies and programs for at-risk children B-5.

In building out its system to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families, VA faces several major issues that will be addressed through the PDG. 1) VA lacks a clear sense of the overall quality of ECCE and what supports are most meaningful to providers, compromising efforts to successfully design and implement improvement strategies. Through PDG, VA will complete quality inventories including baseline assessments in 1,000 publicly-funded classrooms across 10 diverse communities to deeply understand the quality landscape, especially for infants and toddlers, and determine which improvement supports are most helpful. 2) VA's ECCE system needs a sturdier foundation for scaling, as it currently lacks unified standards and expectations, programs have varying capacity to implement effective teaching practices/curriculum, and families have limited access to information to find quality services that meet their needs. Through PDG, VA will develop unified standards to guide program implementation, develop curriculum and teacher capacity, and provide tools to maximize parental choice and knowledge. 3) While general recognition of the issues related to access, affordability, quality, and availability exist, gaps exist in nuanced clarity on how to overcome barriers, particularly for culturally/linguistically diverse families. Through PDG and building on a significant strength, VA will work deeply with 10 Mixed Delivery Pilot Communities as partners in designing effective models to maximize parental choice and knowledge; share best practices among ECCE professionals; reward leaders and teachers for improving quality; and improve the coordination, collaboration, financing, and efficiency of ECCE systems. The lessons learned and models developed can then be scaled statewide and sustained using existing funds more efficiently and effectively, a key part of the planning and capacity building funded through PDG.

Ultimately, PDG will accelerate VA's development of an equitable mixed delivery system that delivers stable, affordable, and quality ECCE for the state's families and children, particularly those who are most vulnerable and will benefit the most. In so doing, VA seeks to make significant progress toward the prioritized outcome of preparing children for kindergarten, putting them on track for success in school and in life.